LONDON
GEO. E. J. COLDWELL

THE TRUTH ABOUT JOHN WYCLIF

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JOHN WYCLIF

HIS LIFE WRITINGS AND OPINIONS

CHIEFLY FROM THE EVIDENCE OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES

BY

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PREFACE.

For the last few months the religious zeal of our Protestant countrymen has found a congenial subject with which to occupy and amuse itself. Scarcely had Martin Luther made his parting bow on the platform and gone back to his own place, ere a kindred spirit steps forward in the person of John Wyclif, and is received with shouts of welcome. He is a Papist and a priest, but he finds himself quite at home among the members of the Tract Society in London and the Free Kirk in Edinburgh. Certain obstacles, which in former days might have stood in the way of this new cultus, are now forgotten or treated with calm indifference. His grand recommendation is that he rebelled against the authority of his ecclesiastical superiors, and persisted till his death in his rebellion. If it be suggested that he died an excommunicated heretic, the fact, if recognized, seems rather to add to his reputation. If we venture to remind the admirers of his principles that these same principles in former days endangered the security of the Church and the crown, led to the murder of an Archbishop of Canterbury on Tower Hill, and deluged London with the blood of her best citizens, the intelligence makes no lasting impression. We Englishmen of the nineteenth

century do not care to trouble ourselves about past horrors, what we need is present excitement. Wyclif promises to give the press and the pulpit something to write and talk about for a few months to come. He serves to keep alive, perhaps not altogether unprofitably, the flagging zeal of a certain class of the believers in the great protestant tradition. Exeter Hall is glad to make his acquaintance, for is he not a man and a brother? Was not he born in Yorkshire and did not he die in Leicestershire? Generally speaking, it is forbidden to worship idols; but in this case an exception may be made in favour of a magnificent specimen of the article, which is warranted genuine. It is of home manufacture, and at the first glance it declares itself to be made of genuine Britannia metal.

Catholics look on in surprise, and venture to question the wisdom of this popular demonstration. To us it seems misplaced and premature. We venture, in all humility, to remind our countrymen that they do not know much about this hero of the hour, and that the little which they do know is not altogether to his credit. He died outside the Church, he taught doctrines subversive of religion, morality, civil government and social order; but we speak in vain. Ignorance easily gives its admiration to a noisy innovator, especially when he becomes insubordinate and uses strong language. So then we must be contented to step to one side and watch the crowd as it hurries by to worship at the shrine of the Saint of Lutterworth. Its agents, as they march past, scatter their pamphlets, tracts and fly-sheets, far and wide, and the credulous ones of the people good-humouredly pick them up, are converted to the doctrines,

believe the statements, and subscribe to the funds of the Wyclif Society. We, too, in a moment of weakness suffer ourselves to read some of the cheap literature thus thrust into our hands, and find in it infinitely more matter for regret than edification. The nation is chidden for having so long permitted the glories of this "Morning Star of the Reformation" to remain in obscurity; and we are warned that, if we hope to escape the coming wrath, present energy must atone for past indifference and and ingratitude. The steady growth and continued expansion of this new *cultus* are assumed as a matter of certainty. It promises to become a successful speculation. We should feel no surprise were we to read that a pilgrimage was about to be organized in order that his disciples might visit the church which Wyclif desecrated by saying the Mass which he believed in his heart to be a blasphemous fable and a dangerous deceit. And so the delusion goes on, gaining increased strength and subscriptions until it reached its culminating point on the last day of December, 1884, that day being the five hundredth anniversary of the death of this messenger of evil.

But the devotion to our newly canonized Saint is not to be permitted to end with the year 1884, for Wyclif's name is to continue in eternal memory. The men who are so hard upon us poor Catholics for commemorating the examples of God's saints, and the sufferings of God's martyrs, have now themselves furnished us with a sufficient answer to their own accusations. When we find them professing a veneration, at once exaggerated and unauthorized, for an individual whose errors and extravagances are much more

conspicuous than his sanctity, we ask them to bear with our respect towards such men as St. Augustine, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas of Canterbury, and to permit us to prefer our saints to theirs. May we venture to go a step further? Will it be considered presumptuous if we dissent from the popular chorus of admiration, and refuse to worship this latest golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the King has set up? The attempt is worth the making. It is important to show that the history of Wyclif is obscured by many dark shadows; and that when judged by the men who had seen him and tested his worth, he is not the hero whom his prejudiced admirers of the present day would have us believe him to have been. Our plainspoken ancestors expressed their sentiments in no courtly language, which, however, is worth quoting for its sincerity. Adam of Usk writes thus: "England, and above all, London and Bristol, stood corrupted, being infected by the seeds which one Master John Wyclif sowed, polluting as it were the faith with the tares of his baleful teaching. And the followers of this Master John, like Mahomet, by preaching things pleasing to the powerful and the rich,—namely, that the withholding of tithes and even of offerings, and the reaving of temporal things from the clergy, were praiseworthy; and to the young that self-indulgence was a virtue;—most wickedly did cast abroad murder, snares, strifes, variance and discords, which last to this day, and which I fear will last even to the undoing of the kingdom."[1] Walsingham's language is still more emphatic. According to his estimate Wyclif was "an organ of the devil, the enemy of the Church, the con-

[1] *Chronicle*, p. 102.

fusion of the people, the idol of the heretics, the mirror of the hypocrites, a promoter of schism, the sower of hatred, and the manufacturer of falsehood."[2] I do not admire the language; but the men who used it knew what they were writing about. In these words they probably expressed the sentiments of nine tenths of their contemporaries.

We Catholics, on our side, hold that the political theories which Wyclif attempted so zealously to introduce, were wild and mischievous; that his vaunted religious system was but the revival of condemned heresies; and that the purity and the sanctity of domestic life would have perished from the household had he succeeded in forcing his socialistic principles upon the men and women of England. Heresy and schism in the Church; insurrection and insubordination in the State; impurity and immorality in the household; here are some of the fruits of Wyclifism as it is described by the men who knew it, and who recognized in it a new form of the beast that ascendeth out of the abyss. Are we to be blamed if we object to its revival among us?

It may possibly be here remarked that such charges as these are not to be made lightly. I freely admit the justice of the observation, and subjoin in reply that neither are the praises which are lavished so blindly upon the hero of the hour to command our unchallenged acceptance. Most of Wyclif's admirers have yet to learn that there are two sides to this question, and that they know only one side, and that imperfectly. We do not act unreasonably, therefore, or unfairly, or unkindly, if we ask them to suspend

[2] *Hist.* ii. 119, ed. 1864.

their judgment until they have heard what Catholics have got to say upon the subject. The men who knew Wyclif as a contemporary of their own, who understood what he was doing and what he aimed at doing, have recorded their impressions and their experiences respecting him and his teaching. Surely such evidence as theirs must be worth the hearing. We, for our part, can afford to treat the subject in the same spirit of dispassionate calmness with which we would endeavour to discuss any other historical problem. There is no reason why Catholics more than others should dread the appearance of the ghost of Wyclif. What is he to us? To us he is nothing but the shadow of a condemned heretic. All we ask is permission to see him from our own point of view, permission that is to see him as his actions and opinions are chronicled in his own writings, and in the pages of contemporary history. And having done this we shall ask the further permission to record the result of our observations, and to abide by our convictions.

This admiration for Wyclif, now so conspicuous, is no new thing. It has been steadily on the increase for some years past. It has shown itself by the dedication of a church to his memory at Birmingham, and by giving his name to a small place of education at Oxford, called Wyclif Hall. One would like to know why it should have been so called. Perhaps it was chosen for no better reason than that it sounded well, and implied a sort of general recognition and acceptance of "the principles of the Reformation." But if it had a deeper meaning it could only be that the training which it professes to give its pupils is intended to

be in conformity with that which the scholars and divines of the Oxford of five hundred years ago had cast out from among them as an unclean thing, and with one voice had declared to be abominable and heretical.

But Oxford has done something more effectual than this. Wyclif's university, having rejected the old faith and adopted the new, seems anxious to show that there at least his name is held in special veneration. Oxford contributed largely towards the publication of his English version of the Bible, it has given us three volumes of his miscellaneous writings, a large portion of which consists of violent invectives against the recognized doctrines of the Catholic Church, and it has employed a learned German professor to edit a new edition of the *Trialogus*, one of the latest and bitterest of all the publications which issued from the prolific pen of the Reformer. And now it joins the movement which invites us to contribute to the formation of a more comprehensive undertaking, the prospectus of which lies before us. It reveals at once the magnitude of the systematical efforts which are being made at the present moment for the publication of the whole of Wyclif's writings, and the probability of the success of that undertaking. If we correctly understand the papers which already have been issued, it would appear that £1,500 are required for the preliminary expenses, and £500 a year during ten years for the printing of the works yet unpublished. Some considerable time ago the list of members included various peers, bishops, deans, and a large body of the clergy of the Established Church, as well as the Moderators of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, of the Free Church, and of the United

Presbyterians. Apparently the project will succeed, and we hope it will. It is important that we should know what really were Wyclif's opinions, and the originators of the undertaking assure us that we cannot do this until all his works are printed.

Here I wish to remark that I do not attempt to write a biography of the great Reformer, or to trace in detail the phases of his unlovely history. I am interested with what he taught rather than with what he did; with Wyclifism rather than with Wyclif. As an individual his personal history is unmarked by any picturesque details or moving incidents, and the events of his life have now become an object of comparative indifference. We care about them only in as far as they help us to estimate his character or to interpret his opinions. But the results of his teaching remain among us a living reality, and their importance as affecting the religious condition of England at the present time cannot be ignored.

John Wyclif's admirers have long ago expressed their opinions about him, and scarcely has a dissentient voice been raised to enter a protest against the praises which have been lavished upon his name and memory. As might have been expected, the excitement through which we are now passing has led to the publication of a very large number of books and pamphlets which profess to give an account of his life and doctrines. Looking at them simply from a literary point of view, and without regard to the religious opinions which they advocate or attack, they are singularly disappointing. The solitary work which has any pretensions to independent research, and which really has advanced our

knowledge of the subject, is that by Dr. Lechler.[3] It exhibits mature and extensive scholarship, combined with a thorough grasp of the subject with which it deals; and in these respects it deserves the position which it has acquired for itself as a contribution of acknowledged merit to the historical literature of the age. Unfortunately, however, it is written in a style which is painfully diffuse, so much so that (as far as facts are concerned) the work might have been compressed with advantage within about one-half of its present bulk. Certain objections of a graver character will be noticed in the course of the following pages.

In contrast with Lechler's masterly production is a disappointing little volume which bears the title of "*Wyclif's Place in History;* three Lectures delivered before the University of Oxford, by Montagu Burrows, M. A., Chichele Professor of Modern History." The Oxford Professor appears to disadvantage when compared with the Professor of Leipsic. His book is vague and declamatory; his narrative is chiefly borrowed from Lechler and Shirley; and although written by one who resides within an easy walk of the treasures of the Bodleian Library, it adds very little to our knowledge of the subject which it professes to illustrate.

It is only just that I should here notice with commendation the carefully written sketch of the life of Wyclif which

[3] *John Wiclif and his English precursors.* By Professor Lechler, D. D. of the University of Leipsic, translated from the German with additional notes by Peter Lorimer, D. D. Two vols. 8vo. 1878. It appears from the Author's Preface (p. vii.) that he has studied his subject since the year 1840. Another edition appeared in 1881, and a third, in one volume the most convenient of all, in 1884; which however bears no date on the title page. The references in the present work are made to this edition.

Mr. F. D. Matthew has prefixed to certain works of the Reformer issued by the Early English Text Society. Worthy of especial attention is a pamphlet by Dr. Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln, and the same remark applies to a masterly communication addressed to "The Guardian" by the Rev. N. Pocock.

Nothing need be said of the flood of sixpenny literature which has been issued by various Protestant societies and by private enterprise. They aim at one object only; and that is to keep alive, to foster, and if possible to embitter, the dislike and contempt which are too generally felt for the Catholic faith; and to represent John Wyclif as a benefactor to whom all owe a debt of gratitude, because he exerted himself through a long life in labouring to accomplish its overthrow.

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THE majority of our countrymen, however varied may be their religious convictions upon other disputed questions, will probably agree in this, that the most important event which has occurred during modern times is that great revolution which, for want of a better name, we are contented to call the Protestant Reformation. It is a fact, of which the importance can no more be denied than the reality. Nor can it be denied that this fact has to a great extent changed the political and religious conditions of nearly every State in Europe; and that still further changes may yet be anticipated, necessarily arising from the same principles. Thus far probably there would be no great diversity of opinion amongst thoughtful men.

But when we push our inquiries beyond this point, when we venture to speculate upon the causes which produced this mighty change, then it becomes by no means easy to agree upon the answer. Different theories present themselves for our acceptance. That which is most commonly adopted among Protestants attributes this religious outbreak to the existence of the numerous abuses and corruptions of faith and morals which are

said to have weakened and dishonoured the Church of the Middle Ages.[1] Other inquirers ascribe it to that natural desire which every generous soul feels to escape from a degrading thraldom, such as that in which it is assumed the laity had long been held by the Catholic clergy. Other theories respecting the origin of the Reformation, more or less tenable, have had their advocates, such as a quarrel between the two rival Orders of the Dominicans and the Augustinians; or the invention of the art of printing; or the revival of literature and the arts; or the discovery of America. Each of these influences may possibly have contributed in some degree to the general result; but not one of them singly was sufficient to produce this grand catastrophe, which for a time seemed to threaten the very existence of the Catholic religion.

But least of all can we ascribe the rapid progress and the unexpected success of this great movement to the moral or intellectual influence of the individuals who placed themselves at its head and directed its operations. Neither on the Continent nor here in England were they remarkable either for their intellectual power or their moral excellence. Among them there was no great theologian, no deep thinker, no philosopher, no historian; nor even yet, with all their admitted educational

[1] Nowhere perhaps has this theory shown itself in deeper colours than in the *Third Part of the Homily against peril of Idolatry* (p. 253 of the edition issued by "the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge"), where it is declared "that laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sects and degrees of men, women and children of whole Christendom (an horrible and most dreadful thing to think) have been at once drowned in abominable idolatry, of all other vices most detested of God and most damnable to man, and that by the space of eight hundred years and more." Consequently, as idolatry is a mortal sin, according to this Homily, every man, woman, and child for eight hundred years was consigned to eternal damnation.

advantages, have our divided brethren produced from their motley ranks a Bellarmine, or a Suarez, or a Baronius. Whatever may have been the power of Luther for a time, it was personal and therefore transient. The system of religion which he invented soon proved itself to be a failure. Luther was the man of strong voice and strong will; he could sway the passions of an excited mob, but he could not argue like a scholar. With others, the influence was even more evanescent. They came like shadows, and like shadows they departed. Zuinglius gave way to Calvin, just as Calvin prepared the road for Socinus and Socinus for Spinosa.

Weighed in the balance of morality the leaders of the Reformation do not appear to advantage. In their personal character they were not edifying. We fail to recognize in them the high purpose which we should expect to find among men who claimed to be sent by Heaven to regenerate a fallen Church. Looking at them as a body we see in them little to admire, and much to lament and to censure. Looking at them as men, we find among them individuals who were too often false and treacherous; some who were even brutal and sensual; men who were arrogant and servile by turns; who flattered the rich and lorded it over the poor. They had no consistency of action, either among themselves or in regard to the Church which they had abandoned, and of which they had vowed the destruction. They tempted the weaker brethren to leave the beaten path, and then deserted them in the midst of the hungry wilderness into which they had wiled them. They hung upon the skirts of courtiers, and were contented to accept any undignified position, provided it gratified their avarice and guaranteed their safety. In England the Reformation owed its birth and received its direction from the Court; it was simply the active expression of the will of

the Monarch for the time being. It wore any livery, however incongruous or motley, which he was pleased to provide for it. It suffered itself to be tossed about with every wind of doctrine in humble subservience to his dictates. Viewed as they appear before us in the pages of history, even when that history is nothing better than an apology, Frith and Barnes, Cranmer and Latimer, Parker and Jewel, seem to have been nothing more than convenient ciphers;—meaningless nonentities when they stand alone, things which derive their significance from the figure which they follow. One and all they were but the exponents of various theories which were forced upon them by the laity, and which it was their duty and their interest to accept and to advocate according to the necessity or the caprice of the moment.

Upon these grounds, then, I have ventured to express my belief that the Reformation does not owe its origin to any one of the causes to which it is generally ascribed; least of all can we trace it to the personal influence of any one individual. Not to Luther, not to Calvin, still less to Henry the Eighth or to Edward the Sixth. We may pass by Cranmer as scarce worth our notice. From its very nature the Reformation must have sprung from causes wider and more permanent, deeper and more comprehensive. Every great movement, like the sad schism of the sixteenth century, invites us to examine its pedigree and to make ourselves acquainted with its forefathers. It cannot be regarded apart from the remoter events with which it necessarily is connected. To the superficial observer the Reformation seems to stand alone in its solitary independence; but a closer examination will show us that it was but the logical outcome of remoter causes, the gathering in of the harvest of which the seed had been sown by an earlier generation.

What does our national history tell us upon the subject?

It has its answer, if we will be contented to listen to what it teaches. It points to an individual who may be styled the originator of the Reformation long before Luther saw the light, and to a body of men who, in their turn, accepted and perpetuated this inheritance of evil. Before we may venture to speak of Cranmer and the Protestants it is necessary that we should know something of Wyclif and the Lollards.

It is popularly believed that even so late as the accession of Henry the Eighth the whole English people was Catholic, and that no marked variations from the faith or ritual of the Church were to be found in active existence among us. This theory cannot be supported. Probably there never was a time when it could be said that our country was absolutely free from error, either as regards its ecclesiastical politics or its religious belief. From the time of the early Normans there had always been in England a party which looked with undisguised suspicion upon the dealings of the Papal Curia, as far as they were supposed to trench on the privileges and liberties of the sovereign. Many of the nobility and even some of the bishops would gladly have made the King independent of the Pontiff in all matters save those which were of a purely dogmatic nature. Here it is enough to refer to the aggressions of William Rufus and the two Henrys, which were resisted by St. Anselm and St. Thomas of Canterbury. From the King this anti-Papal feeling descended to the nobility, and from the nobility to their tenants. This unfortunate irritation was kept alive by the system of Papal provisions, whereby patrons of benefices complained that they were deprived of their civil privileges, of which they loudly clamoured for the restitution. Various other payments demanded from time to time in the name of the Holy See, and legally due, made the authority of Rome still further

unpalatable in England, until it became easy to persuade the people that such claims as these were illegal and ought to be resisted.[2]

The frequent intercourse which existed at this time between England and her wide possessions in Gascony and the south of Europe made the introduction of the Albigensian heresy among us almost a matter of necessity; while the rapidly increasing commerce of London and the other seaports[3] exposed them to the same calamity from the opposite shores of France, Holland and Flanders. All these principles of evil existed among us in embryo; and nothing more was wanting to call such unfledged heretics into formidable activity than the voice and the guidance of a leader. That leader presented himself in the person of John Wyclif, the heresiarch of mediæval England, and assuredly one of the most active and mischievous of the many who have risen in rebellion against the mother who bore them.

We are unable to speak with any certainty as to the place of birth of John Wyclif. Leland, writing in the reign of Henry the Eighth, tells us that "he was born at Spresswell, a poor village, a good mile from Richmond in

[2] An exaggerated and highly coloured list of these claims may be seen in a paper printed in the Collection of Records appended to Collier's History, n. xlvii. (ii. 36, ed. fol.). It is entitled "The abuses, usurpations, and superstitions reformed, abolished, and banished out of England, whereby hypocrites and pharisees do wrongfully slander the most noble King of England and his subjects, against all God's Word, right and conscience."

[3] Thus Adam de Usk in his Chronicle enlarges upon the hold which the doctrines of Wyclif had gained in London and Bristol (p. 3). His editor reminds us that Purvey, Wyclif's follower, and part translator of the Bible, preached in Bristol; and it is not improbable that Wyclif himself also did so, as in 1375 he was presented by Edward III. to the prebend of Aust, in the collegiate church of Westbury on Trim. See *Chron. Adæ de Usk*, p. 102.

Yorkshire." This would seem to be trustworthy evidence; but unfortunately no such village as Spresswell exists, nor is there any record of it ever having existed. We must be satisfied therefore with believing that Wyclif was a native of Richmondshire, and that he belonged to a family [4] so called from a village of the same name distant about four miles from Bernard Castle.

The year of his birth is also uncertain. Lewis, one of his early biographers, thinks that he was born about the year 1324, but he quotes no authority. Knowing that he died in 1384, and assuming that he was about sixty years of age at the time of his death, Lewis arrived at the year 1324 as his starting-point. Some modern inquirers would prefer an earlier date, some a later; but all is conjecture. Of his parents we know nothing.

The same obscurity hangs over Wyclif's earlier years. It is probable that he received the rudiments of his education at one or other of the religious houses, of which there were several in Richmond and the neighbourhood. Be that as it may, it is certain that when he had attained

[4] Two members of a family of this name were conspicuous in the wars with Scotland. During the early part of the reign of Edward the Third, Robert de Wyclif, (who is described as of the wapentake of Gilling,) was commissioned by the King to raise troops to repel Robert Bruce. In 1334 and during the following ten years, writs to the same effect were frequently addressed to Roger de Wyclif, who is described as of the same locality. We find this individual associated with the Vavassors, Maulevrers, Markenfields, Fairfaxes, Scropes, and Darrells of Yorkshire. (See Rot. Scot. i. 222, 287, 303, 369, 528, 653.) In 1604, the Wyclifs of Wyclif ranked as gentlemen, and were returned as recusants. (See Peacock's list of Roman Catholics in the county of York, page 80.) In 1635, Simon Birkbeck, "Minister of God's Word at Gilling in Richmondshire," writes thus. "John Wyclif was born in the north, where there is (near this place where I live) an ancient worshipful house bearing the name of Wyclif of Wyclif. "The Protestant's Evidence," ii. 71, ed. 1635. In all probability then the future Reformer came of a family of considerable antiquity, which at the time of his birth was something more than respectable.

the fitting age he was sent to Oxford for the completion of his studies. It is most probable that the college at which he entered was Balliol. The family of the founder of that college had wide possessions in Teesdale;[5] nothing then would be more natural than that when the boy was sent to the far-off University, his relations should place him among men who would feel an interest in him, if not from kindred at least from local associations, always a strong bond of unity with the northerner. Again: we know that he became Master of Balliol College, and the Foundation Charter provides that no one should be considered eligible to this office unless he had been one of its scholars. A long and intimate connexion must therefore have existed between the student from Richmond and the great educational establishment founded in Oxford by the Lady Dervorgilla.

It is probable that some of his kindred accompanied him, or followed him, to Oxford, and that having passed through Balliol they became priests and obtained preferment, some within the College, some elsewhere. In 1361, when John Wyclif was Master, a certain William de Wyclif was one of the Fellows; and two years afterwards a person of the same name, possibly the same individual, was Rector of Wiclif-on-Tees.[6] Attempts have been made to prove that Master John de Whyteclive (who was presented by Archbishop Islip in August, 1360, to the vicarage of Maghefelde) was one and the same person as the Fellow of Balliol; but the theory is untenable, for the vicar took his name from a locality in Kent.[7]

[5] See Dugd. *Baron.* i. 523.

[6] Shirley, Fascic. Ziz. p. xi. This work *(Fasciculi Zizaniorum magistri Johannis Wyclif, cum tritico)* by Thomas Netter, of Walden, was edited by the Rev. W. W. Shirley, M.A., in 1858, with care and learning, from the unique MS. in the Bodleian Library. The preface is entitled to respectful notice.

[7] Islip's Register, fol. 287 b.

Hitherto we have been compelled to confine ourselves within the region of conjecture, or at best of probability, but from this point we can proceed with a firmer foothold. We have documentary evidence for stating that early in the year 1361, the Fellows of Balliol elected Wyclif as the Master of their College.[8] He must, therefore, at this time have gained the regard and goodwill of the majority of the electors as well as of his diocesan, the Bishop of Lincoln, who accepted and confirmed the nomination. So far we know nothing of the theological opinions of the future Reformer; but that they had not as yet excited any suspicion appears from the fact that in this same year he was presented to the church of Fillingham, in the archdeaconry of Stow, a benefice of considerable value.[9]

So far then as we have had the means of tracing it, the life of Wyclif would seem to have been one of respectable success up to this point. He had risen in his College and the University, and he was a beneficed priest holding a good position in the Church. He was already known as the author of several treatises on disputable questions in logic and physics, in the discussion of which he is supposed to have exhibited much acumen. He is also said to have "possessed a special faculty and taste for natural philosophy," and if we may believe his modern biographers, he had mastered every phase of the known and the knowable.[10] According to his contempo-

[8] Lewis, Life of Wyclif, p. 4. ed. 1820.

[9] Id. p. 5.

[10] Mr. Matthew, in his *Life of Wyclif* (p. 11,) asserts that in one of his sermons Wyclif "notices the experiment of making a coin visible by covering it with water to show refraction." This illustration is not original. It is found in the treatise "De oculo morali" (MS. Lamb. 523, f. 10.) by Bishop Grostete, whence doubtless Wyclif took it.

rary Knighton,[11] he was second to none in philosophy, and without a rival in the learning of the schools. Even his sturdy antagonist Harpsfield admits the acuteness of his intellect.[12] But we now enter upon a new phase of his career, and from this point onwards the line of conduct which he pursued is open to the gravest censure.

In the year 1361, Simon Islip, Archbishop of Canterbury, anxious, as he tells us, for the advancement of education in England, and with the hope of supplying the want among the clergy occasioned by the great pestilence, determined to found a college or hall in the University of Oxford. He hesitated, however, as to its constitution. In his episcopal capacity as diocesan of the see of Canterbury he wished to help the secular clergy; but at the same time he could not be blind to the claims of the monks of his own cathedral church, and of the many other regulars within his diocese. Thinking to aid both, he attempted to make a compromise by uniting seculars and regulars in one and the same collegiate establishment. The attempt was a failure. It was satisfactory to neither party; nor could it be, for their habits, rules, discipline, and mode of life were inconsistent with each other. The Archbishop soon discovered that the mixed system must be abandoned and that a new plan working in an opposite direction must be adopted. He changed the constitution by transferring the College to the secular clergy, simply, over whom he placed Wyclif as the Warden. He made the change with a precipitancy which would be somewhat remarkable were it not partially explained by the fact that the Archbishop considered that this second alteration was only another experiment, and that if it worked badly

[11] Chron. apud Decem Script. col. 2644. *Doctor in theologia emenentissimus. In philosophia nulli reputabatur secundus, in scholasticis disciplinis incomparabilis.*

[12] Hist. Wyclif, 667.

he could cancel the present arrangement as he had cancelled the last; for he had still reserved to himself the power of so doing as often as he should consider it expedient. The act, however, betrayed a want of forethought. It involved his infant foundation at Oxford in great difficulties, it entailed upon his successor in the see of Canterbury an expensive lawsuit and the payment of a heavy fine; for the necessary authority for the change not having been obtained from the Crown, the whole transaction was regarded as irregular, illegal, and invalid.

Perhaps we may find a further explanation of this unsteadiness of purpose in the failing health of the Archbishop. He was already crippled by an illness which in the end proved fatal. In the January of 1363, as he was riding from Sevenoaks to Tunbridge, he fell from his horse (apparently in a fit), and on his arrival at Mayfield, where he generally resided, paralysis declared itself. He rallied for a time, however, and in the following July he visited Canterbury and Charing; but was carried from place to place in a litter. Returning to Mayfield he spent the short remainder of his life in that favourite abode, in which he died in 1366. Such was his infirm condition when he made these experiments in the constitution of his College, and appointed Wyclif as its new Warden.[13]

But looking at the document simply as it stands, the appointment of Wyclif by Islip was a mark of undoubted and undoubting confidence. It is expressed in terms of high esteem and regard. The Archbishop commends the laudable honesty of the life and conversation of his dear son, Master John de Wyclif, his knowledge and his

[13] For these notices of Islip's state of health, see the curious details given by Stephen Birchington, monk of Canterbury, printed in the *Angl. Sac.* i. 46.

learning, his fidelity, circumspection, and industry.[14] The nominee accepted the appointment and entered upon the duties of this important charge. Whether he retained the headship of Balliol and the rectory of Fillingham is uncertain; probably he vacated both.

For reasons which will appear hereafter, it becomes important to ascertain the nature of the arrangement under which Wyclif held Canterbury Hall from Archbishop Islip. He might grant it to be held by the Warden for life, or for a term of years, or during pleasure. Wyclif said, after Islip's death, that he had been appointed for life; Langham, Islip's successor, maintained on the other hand, that the appointment was only during the good pleasure of the Archbishop, and no longer. The question then turned upon a matter of fact. Had Islip left behind him any written record of his intentions in respect to the tenure of the headship? If so, the document, could it be produced, would solve the question.

The same volume of Islip's register at Lambeth, which contains the copy of his appointment of Wyclif to the Wardenship of Canterbury Hall, contains also the Archbishop's statutes for the government of his new foundation.[15] As they are but little known, an outline of their contents may be of interest. The founder provides that his College shall consist of a Warden, a Chaplain, and eleven Fellows; an arrangement which would seem to place it on the same footing as Balliol, Exeter, and Oriel. "No one shall be elegible as a Fellow who has any notable mark on his face." Fellows shall remain on probation as novices for two or three years,

[14] It is dated at Mayfield on the fifth of the ides of December [9 Dec.], 1365, and is printed in Lewis's *Life*, p. 290, from Islip's Register, fol. 306. See also Ant. Wood, Hist. Oxon. p. 184.

[15] Islip's Register, fol. 213 b. *Constitutiones sive Statuta Aulæ Cantuariensis in Universitate Oxoniæ.* They are printed in Wilkins, iii. 52, from Islip's Register, 213 b. (A.D. 1362).

at the discretion of the Master and the other Fellows. All shall dine at the common table. Five marks per annum may be allowed for life to a sick Fellow. Minute regulations are laid down for the dress of the Fellows, the furs which they may use, etc. The cost of the Master's gown shall not exceed 30s., that of the Bachelor 24s., and that of the Sophist 18s. It is ordered *ne clochis aut gimmis, aliisve vestibus quibuscumque nisi tabbardis suis desuper . . . utantur.* Leave of absence may be given for two years for study in a foreign college, with a pension of twenty marks. All are to speak Latin at table, and generally in the house, "but they shall not chatter all together at the same time like geese or magpies." The Warden and the Fellows are removable. When the chapel is built, such of the Fellows as are priests shall say daily a Mass of the Blessed Trinity, or of our Blessed Lady, or of the day. On Sundays and festivals there shall be a Mass *cum nota*, at which all the Fellows shall be present. Minute rules are given for the safe custody of the books, vestments, and common seal; also as to the servants, the bursar, and the money in the common chest. The Master and Fellows may permit certain *artistæ* to attend lectures on civil or canon law. The accounts of the house are to be balanced every year. All repairs of the buildings are to be carefully watched, for they are a fertile source of expense and mischief. And then come some remarks which have such a direct bearing upon the point in dispute between Langham and Wyclif that I insert them here. Treating "of the liberty and exemption of our said hall," Islip thus expresses himself. "Since we have founded the said hall entirely out of the goods of the archbishoprick and our own, we are unwilling that it should be ruled in any respect by any extern who is inferior to ourselves, either in regard to individuals or property, nor shall it

be submitted or be subject in any way to any foreign jurisdiction excepting that of our successors, who shall be regarded as the founders of the said hall. And it shall be lawful for him, or for others, to regulate his said hall in the head, the members and the property; and further to explain, correct, augment, and alter our statutes aforesaid whenever and as often as it shall be necessary."[16]

It is scarcely possible to believe that Wyclif should be ignorant of these regulations, or of the Archbishop's intentions respecting the constitution of the house in which he was so deeply interested. Nor can we suppose that Islip would appoint a man as to whose views he was doubtful, or one whose opinions upon a point which he held to be so essential differed from his own. More than this: these arrangements were embodied in an oath,[17] drawn up by the founder, and which he required each Warden to take before being qualified to enter upon his office. He requested Wyclif to take it, and Wyclif complied. It appears then not only that Wyclif knew Islip's mind from the beginning, but further that he had sworn to carry it out into practice. In short, he held his position as Warden of Canterbury Hall under this explicit arrangement, and it is difficult to understand how he could plead ignorance of it.[18]

[16] *Statutaque nostra prædicta cum et quotiens opus fuerit declarare, corrigere, adjicere et mutare (Id.* fol. 215 b).

[17] *Reservata nobis receptione juramenti corporalis per te nobis præstandi debiti in hac parte* (*Id.* fol. 306, Lewis, p. 290).

[18] Lewis, while busy in collecting materials for his history of John Wyclif, received considerable assistance from the prebendaries of Canterbury, one of them, Elias Sydall (afterwards Bishop of St. David's and Gloucester), sent him a letter on the question in which we are at present interested, an extract from which is worthy of the reader's attention. "On the other side is a true copy of what is in our Register K, fol. 67, relating to the nomination of a Warden of Canterbury Hall. Whether we have Islip's own Statutes anywhere I am not able to say. But that this was the method of making a Warden according to Islip's ordinance I think is

Within about six months from the time of this transaction, Archbishop Islip died, leaving his work at Oxford incomplete.[19] He was succeeded by Simon de Langham, formerly Bishop of Ely and Chancellor of England. The unfinished work at Oxford naturally claimed his attention, and the condition in which he found it proved upon examination to be far from satisfactory. The technical knowledge which Langham had acquired as Chancellor of England enabled him to see that in the eye of the law the foundation called Canterbury Hall had ceased to exist, and by right had lapsed to the Crown. Resolving, however, to carry out the good intentions of his predecessor, and profiting by his experience, Langham determined to adopt such modifications in the earlier plan as to him seemed not only wise and fitting, but absolutely necessary. Canterbury Hall had been founded by an Archbishop of Canterbury out of his own funds, and was endowed with preferments, of the patronage of which he had dispossessed himself and his successors; it seemed to Langham to be no unreasonable thing therefore that under such circumstances his own Cathedral Church

plain from what I here send you, and what I find in our Register B, fol. 378, where we have Courtney's Statutes, who (according to a power reserved by Islip the founder, to add to, or take from, or change, or correct the Statutes) did accordingly review them and confirmed that part relating to the nomination of the Warden, which is there recited as the way appointed by Islip. It appears then further that the wardenship was to be only *ad domini beneplacitum*, and that the Archbishop for the time being, alone, and no other, could remove the Warden, if his demerits required it, *absque judiciali strepitu*, and put another in his room, *juxta formam superius traditam*. . . . All this is recited by Courtney as part of Islip's Statutes."

The original letter signed and sealed may be seen in MS. Bodley, Rawlinson, D. 376, fol. 140. See also Lewis's *Wyclif*, 290, 291, 292.

[19] *Morte præventus, hujusmodi opus imperfectum dimisit* (Birchington, *Angl. Sac.* i. 46). Wyclif's appointment is dated December 9, 1365, and Islip died April 26, 1366.

should be the first to benefit by these acts of disinterested liberality. He had precedents to quote in support of what he was doing. Durham had founded a College for the education of its own monks, so had Gloucester; and several of the religious orders, the Augustinian canons, the Cistercians, the Franciscans, and the Dominicans had each its own foundation at Oxford. Why might not an Archbishop of Canterbury do the like for the education of the inmates of his own Cathedral Church, the more especially as he had endowed it out of his own revenues? Langham saw no difficulty, and he resolved to act accordingly. In doing what he did he seems not only to have kept strictly within his legal rights, but to have enforced them with discretion and moderation.

The reader will remember that Wyclif was appointed Warden of Canterbury Hall on December 9, 1365, and that Islip died on April 26, in the following year, 1366. On November 5 of the same 1366, Langham took possession of his see, which he found in some disorder, owing to the long illness of his predecessor. It was not until April 22, 1367, that he was able to take active measures respecting Canterbury Hall, and the question of tenure now at last came to an issue between Wyclif and his eccleciastical superior.

Two courses, a right and a wrong, were open to the Warden. He might if he pleased have surrendered the College into the hands of the Archbishop, leaving him to deal with it according to his conscience as the successor of its founder, Archbishop Islip. The other course was to retain possession of the College and its appurtenances, upon the plea that the appointment made by Islip could not be set aside at the will of Islip's successor. Wyclif resolved to adopt this latter course. He left it to the Archbishop to settle two preliminary difficulties as he best might; in the first place, to decide whether the law

provided him with a remedy, and then, if this were answered in the affirmative, whether he would have the courage to enforce that remedy by a legal process.

Was Wyclif right in deciding to adopt the course which he was about to pursue?

It might be urged by his apologists that it is impossible to answer this question with certainty, and difficult perhaps even to offer an opinion. Circumstances of which we know nothing, may have exercised a powerful influence in bringing about the decision at which Wyclif arrived. Feelings and sentiments change with the times; and considerations which with us in our day would appear conclusive, might possibly have seemed frivolous and inconsequential in the eyes of men trained in the opinions which prevailed in the England of the fourteenth century. Still, admitting all this, it appears to me that we may approximate very closely to the truth. Making due allowance for all these considerations, and looking at the question which I have here ventured to raise no otherwise than as it presents itself to the ordinary common sense and the average good feeling of the bulk of mankind, most of us, I think, would have found no great difficulty in solving the problem. Or rather, to speak more correctly, there ought to have been no problem to solve; there was simply an act of duty to perform. Wyclif ought to have surrendered Canterbury Hall into the hands of the Archbishop. Let us see, in the first place what were the facts.

Wyclif was a man of good family, good social position, and good education; he was a priest moreover, and we may suppose him to have been influenced by the feelings which ordinarily guide a gentleman, a scholar, and a Christian. He was appointed to a situation of dignity and emolument by his Archbishop, who informed not only him but others, that the appointment was tenable

during pleasure. That such was the intention of the Archbishop is made obvious by the fact that he had just removed a prior occupant to make way for Wyclif. The written document by which Wyclif held the office, if it stood alone, is indefinite, and would have little weight either way; but when interpreted by the Statutes drawn up by Islip it becomes most conclusive. The Archbishop died leaving Wyclif in possession of the College, who sought to retain it upon the plea that he was not removable by the successor of the person by whom he had been originally appointed. Such being the case, most of us, I think, would admit the right to be on the side of the Archbishop for the time being; and if that right were to be disputed, one would like to know upon what evidence. It must have been documentary evidence, or parole evidence, or both. We are curious to see whether Wyclif has any such to produce.

Archbishop Simon de Langham was a prudent man; and his experience as Lord High Chancellor of England had taught him many valuable lessons; among the rest it had taught him the value of gentleness combined with firmness. He probably knew the character of the man with whom he was dealing, and he acted accordingly. He opened the correspondence by a letter, from which, as it has never been printed, I give the following extracts. He sends his "greeting, grace, and benediction to his dear sons, Master John Wyclif, and the other scholars of his Hall of Canterbury in the University of Oxford, founded by his predecessor of good memory, Lord Simon de Islip, late Archbishop of Canterbury." He informs them that he has admitted Henry de Wodhull, monk of Canterbury, D.D., to the wardenship of the said Hall, and appointed him to be Warden of the same "during pleasure, as is customary:" and then he continues in the following terms. "Wherefore," says he, "we command

all and each of you in virtue of obedience, firmly enjoining you kindly to admit the aforesaid Henry to be Warden of the said Hall, he having been thus appointed by us your Warden, and Warden of our said Hall; and that you receive him or his substitute in this matter, and effectually obey him in all things, as is becoming. Dated at Maghfeld, 10 kalends of May [22 April], in the first year of our consecration." [20]

Wyclif having paid no attention to the letter or the appointment, the Archbishop's next step was to sequestrate the proceeds of the church of Pageham, which had been granted to Canterbury Hall by Islip. Hereupon the rebellious Oxonians raised a suit against Langham, and proceedings were begun in the Court of Rome between the litigants. Two documents, which are yet extant in the Archbishop's library at Lambeth, enable us to follow each step of the legal process from its outset to its conclusion.[21] One of these documents was printed by Lewis so far back as the year 1720, from a transcript furnished to him by Dr. Wilkins, the editor of the *Concilia*. The other, the more valuable of the two, has hitherto been passed over unnoticed, and remains unprinted up to the present time. By the help of these two papers we arrive at an intelligible account of the whole dispute between Wyclif and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The case having been brought into the Papal Court, was referred to the hearing and decision of Cardinal Androinus de Rocha,[22] formerly Abbot of Cluny. The cause was heard at Viterbo, and it was opened by Wyclif's counsel, or attorney, a Fellow of his College, named Richard Benger,[23] who contented himself with simply

[20] Langham's Register, fol. 98 b, in Lambeth Library.

[21] MS. Lambeth, 104.

[22] Raynaldi, A.D. 1362, § 5; Ciaconius, i. 917.

[23] The reader may remember that Islip's statutes permitted the study

giving a narrative (according to his own view) of the facts of the case, leaving it to his opponent to show upon what authority the present Archbishop had (as he said) interfered with the arrangements of his predecessor. The litigants were then cited to appear in Court on a specified day, according to the prescribed form. Wyclif's attorney failed to attend, and by his absence caused a delay in the progress of the action. Again and again he resorted to the same expedient; and offering no explanation for this continued contempt of Court, Benger was at last pronounced contumacious, and his principal in the suit, Wyclif, was cited. He too treated the judge with the same disrespect, whereupon he incurred the same censure, and finally the sentence was given in favour of the Archbishop. It was ruled by the judge that the monks of Canterbury should be restored to the undisturbed possession of the College, together with all the goods connected with it, moveable and immoveable, of which they had been deprived by John Wyclif and his adherents.

Out of this narrative, which tells its story with such simplicity of detail as almost to sink into the regions of the humblest common-place, the partisans of Wyclif endeavour to build up theories intended to exalt him into the dignity of a martyr for the sake of truth. To serve their turn the Pope is held up as a persecutor, and the Papal Court as a den of thieves. Lewis thinks "that this decision of His Holiness was an arbitrary act in favour of the religious, who were his life-guard, and who hated the seculars."[24] Lewis is privileged to write in this vein, and we have no wish to interrupt him; but when Professor Burrows echoes his folly and goes a step

of civil or canon law by a certain number of the Fellows. Benger had availed himself of this privilege, and thus was in a position to act as Wyclif's agent at the least possible expense to the College and its insubordinate occupants.

[24] P. 18.

beyond it we feel sorry for Oxford.[25] For my part, I cannot see any fraud, or oppression, or injustice in the way in which this trial was conducted. To me the case seemed simple enough. Knowing from the beginning that "he had not a leg to stand upon" (if I may be permitted to use a legal phrase), and yet anxious to retain possession of the property in dispute as long as the law would allow him, Wyclif employs one of the Fellows of his own College to act as his attorney—a very prudent arrangement, since it could be done at a very moderate expenditure. This agent permits the case to be opened, and then disappears and is seen no more. He had done all that the law required of him. He knew that the suit must now run its course, according to the recognized legal formalities, which cost his own employer nothing, but which entail a heavy and unavoidable expenditure upon his opponent. After a long and costly delay the case is decided in favour of the Archbishop, who, after all this trouble, anxiety, and expense, at last regains possession of his property. Here I see no cause to censure his Grace of Canterbury, or to mourn over the cruel fate of the defeated litigant. To me Wyclif's conduct seems to have been the opposite to respectable. He raised an action which he knew he could not carry on.

[25] P. 56. This writer permits himself to talk of the monks moving Heaven and earth to procure the total expulsion of the secular clergy, whereas the Archbishop did no more than appear as defendant in a court into which he had been dragged by the unscrupulous obstinacy of an unprincipled litigant, who by such a line of conduct hoped to retain yet longer possession of another man's property. He would have us believe that this same humble and persecuted Reformer, after a wardenship of only one year and a few months, was, with his three faithful friends, superseded by monks; the truth being that he was conscious from the beginning that he had no defence, and that he was ignominiously expelled by the judicial sentence of a competent judge. Has Oxford no more efficient champion to stand forward in defence of her hero?

Under cross-examination he would not have appeared to advantage. His agent had no evidence to produce, and he was afraid to appear in court. Flight was his only chance of escape, so he ran away and abandoned further proceedings. The whole transaction was discreditable. Yet such cases are by no means unfrequent, and they will continue so long as trickery and treachery exist in the world. The occupant of another man's property, who resolves to maintain possession until he is ousted by the judge's sentence, is a character who sometimes appears in the police office and the county court, and seldom is admired or respected. I see no reason why an exception should be made in favour of the plaintiff in the case of "the Rev. John Wyclif *v.* the Archbishop of Canterbury."

CHAPTER II.

Wyclif's defeat at Viterbo—Fails to secure the see of Worcester—Leaves Oxford—Becomes "The King's peculiar clerk"—Meaning of the term—His employment by the Court.

For several reasons I have thought it necessary to enter at some length into the history of the memorable lawsuit between John Wyclif and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Not only is the narrative interesting and instructive in itself, but it gives us an insight into the character of the Reformer, and prepares us for much which is to follow. Moreover, it exercised an important influence upon his future history. The sentence pronounced at Viterbo formed the turning point in his life, and from it may be reckoned what in modern phraseology would be termed "a new departure." Wyclif was thoroughly beaten. It was not only a defeat but an overthrow. It implied the necessity of an entire change of tactics, and a change in tactics rendered necessary a new base of operations. From the moment that Wyclif lost his lawsuit he stood upon the brink of a great revolution.

While the issue of the suit was yet in suspense, he had permitted himself to believe that the popular feeling was with him. It was not unreasonable for him to suppose that among the large body of students who were at that time congregated within the walls of Oxford there must have been some who, from one motive or another, would join the party which he was supposed to

represent. To hold forcible possession of an entire college and to defy the Metropolitan of all England were supposed to show courage and independence of spirit, and as such commanded admiration in some quarters. Again, Wyclif was sure to be regarded, if not by himself at least by others, as the champion of the secular clergy; an idea which, wherever accepted, would evoke a large amount of active and earnest partisanship in his favour. Once more; he was a "northern,"[1] while the Archbishop and his monks were Kentishmen; good grounds here for a very pretty quarrel at a time when the jealousy between the two "nations," as they were termed, might easily break forth with something like the ferocity of a border warfare.[2] Wyclif's habitually self-satisfied temperament led him to miscalculate the value of these advantages, and to exaggerate the importance which they seemed to give him for the moment. He mistook wonder for admiration, notoriety for popularity. And so he lived on in a fool's paradise until the moment when the Papal decision was pronounced at Viterbo.

The publication of the sentence was attended by certain circumstances which made it yet more humbling. Anticipating, as it would seem, that the rebels who had seized Canterbury Hall might try to keep forcible possession of it, the judge who decreed their expulsion provided also for its enforcement. He directed the Prior of Lewes, the Chancellor of Salisbury, and the Dean of Chichester to read his final decision in the hearing of Wyclif, and then to give the monks of Canterbury actual and immediate possession of the buildings of which they had been so long and so wrongfully deprived. The

[1] Walsingham (i. 324) describes him as . . . . "*quidam borealis, dictus magister Johannes Wyclif.*"

[2] See Anstey's *Memorials of the Univ. of Oxford*, 92, 93, 462; Wood's *Hist.* A.D. 1267, 1274, 1305.

defeated litigants were warned that any resistance would meet with prompt repression. They were told that the sentence of excommunication by bell, cross, and candle would immediately follow, and would be repeated on each Sunday and festival during High Mass until they had sued for and obtained pardon and absolution.[8] The judge was in earnest, and both parties knew it. Even Wyclif shrunk from encountering such an array of ecclesiastical censures, as were ready to be fulminated against him. His flatterers and followers deserted him; he recognized his true position, and he felt that he was defeated, disgraced and ruined.

But this was not all. As it generally happens that "sorrows come not singlehanded," so another disappointment followed in the train of the former ones. Wyclif seems to have persuaded himself that he was likely to be promoted to the episcopate, and he had been on the watch for every vacancy. One occurred in the see of Worcester, but when it was filled up Wyclif found that he was not the favoured candidate. He thought himself neglected and injured, and he gave way to feelings of disappointment, anger, and revenge. Upon what foundation he built this hope I know not. Perhaps it may have been reasonable and well-grounded, perhaps it was utterly fallacious; but the reasonableness or the folly of the expectation does not affect the fact of its existence. And that it was a fact I venture to affirm upon the following evidence.

Thomas Netter, commonly called Thomas Waldensis (from Walden, in Essex, of which he was a native), tells us that the charge which I have mentioned was publicly brought forward against Wyclif by Robert Hallam, Bishop

[8] These details are taken from the second of the two official documents contained in the Lambeth MS. 104, fol. 219 b., and are now for the first time published.

of Salisbury, "in the great Synod of the clergy of Canterbury."[4] The same writer repeats the accusation yet more distinctly. "Well informed men," says he, "report as an undoubted fact that Wyclif's heresy against the endowment of the Church and every ecclesiastical authority within it, had its beginning in his disappointed hope of obtaining the bishopric of Worcester, to which he indiscreetly aspired."[5] Netter is not our only authority. One John Palmer, an Englishman (who was present at the Council of Bâle in 1434), affirms that the bitter attacks of the Reformer upon the clergy may be dated from this same incident.[6] The accusation then is precise as to the fact; when therefore I find that his apologists make no attempt to deny it or to explain it, I think I do Wyclif no injustice in accepting it as indisputable.[7]

Such, then, was the position in which the future Reformer now found himself. The conviction was forced upon him from more sides than one that he had ruined his prospects of success as far as Oxford was concerned. True, it still held out to him many prizes, any one of which must have stimulated and would have rewarded his ambition; but to the attainment of each and all of these his own conduct had now raised up an insuperable barrier. No college could henceforth be expected to place at its head a person of such suspicious antecedents as the late litigious Warden of Canterbury Hall. The questionable circumstances

[4] Doct. Fid. i. 394, 560; ii. 60. Hallam was Bishop of Salisbury from 1408 to 1417 (Le Neve, ii. 601).

[5] *Id.* iv. 33. [6] Tanner, *Bibl.* 570, 767.

[7] The see of Worcester was thrice vacant during the period within which this event would seem to have occurred, namely, 1361, 1363, and 1368. I do not undertake to specify its precise date; we are concerned only in knowing that the charge has been made and never met. See Le Neve, iii. 58.

attending the oath which he was believed to have taken for the satisfaction of Archbishop Islip were still allowed to remain an unsolved mystery; and the lawsuit which he had carried on with Archbishop Langham amounted to something little better than a legalized fraud. So much for his chances of success in the University. He had hoped for preferment on the Episcopal Bench, but surely there were not many bishops already seated on it who would have offered him the right hand of fellowship. Would any Chapter in England venture to elect him? Would the Crown accept the nomination? Would the Pope confirm it? Wyclif was never remarkable for modesty or humility; but even at his best, or his worst, he must have felt that he would never wear the bishop's mitre.

In the midst of these grinding disappointments, one remedy cannot but have presented itself to his mind, and all who read the terrible history of the man must wish that in his hour of trial he had accepted it; for it was the best, the wisest, and the happiest mode of escape from his difficulties. He could not have forgotten that he was a parish priest, and as such was charged with the responsibility of caring for the souls of his parishioners. Lechler tells us "that he did not apply himself exclusively to pastoral duties in Fillingham."[8] Why not give himself up to the special duties of his sacred calling, and in the quiet of his benefice lead the life to which he had pledged himself when he accepted it? I do not venture to answer the question. I cannot but observe, however, that Wyclif did not fail to turn his several benefices, one after the other, to what he considered a good account. He neglected "the pastoral duties" of his rectory, as we have seen, but he retained the rank and the emoluments which he derived from it. And he

[8] p. 102.

did worse; he abused them. At a later period of his career, when he resided at Lutterworth, he did one of two things. Either he habitually and systematically taught his people the usual Catholic faith and practised the usual Catholic ritual, neither of which he himself believed; or he substituted for them his own private doctrines and practices, and thereby committed a daily fraud upon the Church which he pretended to serve. For twenty years this was the situation in which he and his parishioners stood in reference to each other. To me it seems an awful alternative. I have long sought for an explanation of his conduct, but sought in vain. His biographers, ancient and modern, are silent; Lewis and Vaughan, Shirley and Lechler, abandon their hero in the hour of his extremity. Am I uncharitable when I remember the oath which Wyclif is said to have sworn to Islip?

So then Worcester had already become a vision and Oxford was fast fading into a memory. To him it could never again be what it once had been; and he saw in it but the record and the proof of his own failure and disappointment. Changed faces met him at every corner of the street. Men did not listen to his speculations with the deference which they once had shown. The days had altered since he was Master of Balliol, or Warden of Canterbury Hall. This *villicus iniquitatis* had wasted his Master's goods, the day of reckoning had come, and it was told to him that he might be no longer steward. Unable to dig, ashamed to beg, he resolved what he would do, so that when he was put out of the stewardship men as unscrupulous as himself should receive him into their houses. He was ready to make a bargain with them. He left Oxford and sought a more congenial occupation in the world of politics in London.

While Wyclif is in London our acquaintance with

him becomes indistinct, for he passes into an existence with the conditions of which we are but very imperfectly acquainted. Everywhere he preserves a cautious silence about himself, and he keeps aloof from friend and foe alike. We observe one thing, however, which is worthy of notice. At a very early period of his abode in London he had secured for himself a definite position in the Court. We have his own authority for telling us that in a peculiar sense he has become the "King's cleric."[9] What was it to be the King's cleric? As far as I am aware, there was no such office either in the royal household, or in the Parliament, or in the Chancery, or in the Exchequer. We turn for information to his biographers, with the expectation that they will interpret the term for us. Mr. F. D. Matthew thinks that Wyclif probably held a royal chaplaincy in the Court, or (as he says in another place) that he was the "first Parliamentary reporter."[10] It is Lechler's[11] opinion that he might possibly have had a seat and voice in the Parliament of 1366, as an elected representative of the inferior clergy, or in virtue of the royal prerogative. To me these explanations seem untenable. Had Wyclif been a member of Parliament in the ordinary sense of the phrase, he would have said so. Then, as now, it was a familiar term, of which the owner was far from being ashamed. Wyclif resorts to the use of a dubious expression, and seems to employ it for the purpose of concealment. Under these circumstances the simplest course is to refer to the document itself in which it occurs, and examine the information which that document places before us. But here a few observations become necessary.

[9] Wyclif terms himself *peculiaris regis clericus* (Lewis, p. 349).

[10] *Eng. Works*, p. v. *Life*, p. 17.

[11] Lechler, p. 130.

Pope Innocent the Sixth died on September 12, 1362, and was succeeded by Urban the Fifth, an appointment which was unpopular in England. The newly-elected Pontiff was by birth a Frenchman, and England and France were at war. There was a further cause for discord between the two nations. Urban had for long been anxious to remove the Papal residence from Avignon to Rome, and in 1366 he publicly announced his intention of doing so. But the unavoidable expenditure required for such a measure was considerable, and the Papal finances were nearly exhausted. The Pope found himself driven to apply for money wherever there was the prospect of obtaining it; and as among his other debtors stood England, he made his want known to the English Sovereign. King John had undertaken to pay to the Holy See an annuity of one thousand marks; and as no payment had been made since the year 1333, Pope Urban assured King Edward that the transmission of the arrears would be very acceptable and would be considered as a favour. Edward referred the matter to his Parliament.[12]

When the Parliament met in London in the May of 1366, it was in a bad humour. The application for the arrears claimed by the Holy See was treated with indignant scorn. The King showed the world at large that he was of the same mind as his Commons. The decision at which they eventually arrived was to the effect that

[12] For the Pope's letter, see Raynaldi, 1365, § 13, dated at Avignon, 13 June, an. 3. Lewis (p. 19) states that "Pope Urban gave notice to King Edward that he intended by process to cite him to his Court, then at Avignon, to answer for his default in not performing the homage which King John, his predecessor, acknowledged to the See of Rome for his realm of England and dominion of Ireland, and refusing to pay the tribute by him granted to the said See." In the *Biographia Brit.* p. 4259, this erroneous statement is further improved; the Pope is now said to have "threatened" to cite the King. The Pope's letter, referred to above, does not warrant either of these interpretations.

neither King John nor any other Sovereign could place himself or his people in such subjection without the assent of the Parliament, and that no such assent had ever been granted. Inasmuch, then, as it was contrary to the oath which the King had taken when he was crowned, they decided that the Papal demand must be rejected. They further ruled that in case His Holiness should attempt in any way to enforce this claim, they would resist him to the uttermost of their power.[13]

We are now in a position to turn to the document drawn up by Wyclif in his official capacity as "the King's peculiar clerk."[14] It contains his reply to the arguments advanced some time previously by an anonymous monk who had spoken on the Papal side of the question. This preliminary discussion would seem to have taken place for the purpose of drawing forth from the Papal party a summary of the arguments which they probably would employ when the discussion should actually come forward in the House. The meeting now held under the guidance of Wyclif was meant as an answer to the arguments of their clerical antagonists in Parliament. The entire question is skilfully portioned out among several speakers, to each of whom is assigned his own section of the argument. Taken collectively, the present discussion covers the entire field of the debate, and if

[13] The whole decision may be seen in the Parliamentary Rolls, ii, 290.

[14] It is headed, "Determinatio quædam magistri Johannis Wyclyff de dominio contra unum monachum," and is printed (very inaccurately) by Lewis (p. 349) from one of Selden's MSS. A transcript made by Dr. James, from a Bodley MS., in the Lambeth MS. 537, affords many corrections. In a notice prefixed to it, Dr. James conjectures that the anonymous monk was either Tyssington or Wodeford; and remarks that the arguments here employed by Wyclif, or by the speakers whose words he reports, require a favourable interpretation to keep them free from schism. A candid admission this to make, but then James was writing to an admirer of Wyclif, as he himself was.

properly carried out would present a formidable line of battle, either for defence or attack. We see from the result that it served both purposes. In it Wyclif, in his character of Devil's advocate, speaks with the greatest freedom against the Pope, the Cardinals, and the clergy at large; while with ill-disguised mockery he styles himself "a humble and obedient son of the Roman Church, who protests that he will not advance aught that could either be injurious to it, or could reasonably offend the ears of the godly."[15] The whole document breathes the railing spirit of advanced Wyclifism.

From the contents of this paper we can discover, therefore, without much difficulty the nature of the duties of "the King's peculiar clerk," by whom it was drawn up. In virtue of his appointment he was expected to act as counsel for the Crown in all cases where the Crown expected to come into collision with the Church; an event which, judging by the spirit of the age and the temper of the English parliament, was likely to occur not unfrequently. Possibly he might even go so far as to suggest occasions when a conflict might be provoked. Many questions of an ecclesiastical nature were being dragged forward to the front for discussion, and out of them it was seen that a useful amount of capital might be extracted by skilful treatment. But to do this the manipulation of an expert was needed. Here Wyclif was ready to turn his long ecclesiastical training to good purpose, and he soon found that the English Court was the market where it would bring the best price. This very "peculiar clerk" was ready on the shortest notice to give an opinion or to conduct an argument on the side of the King—in other words, against the Church and the Pope. For this he was well adapted by the nature of his education. His experience in the schools had made

[15] Lewis, p. 351.

him a ready disputant and a skilful logician. "He came to be reckoned," says the Rev. Mr. Lewis,[16] "inferior to none of his time in philosophy, and incomparable in the performance of school exercises; a man of profound wit and very strong and powerful in disputations, and was by the common sort of divines esteemed little less than a god." This was the very kind of man whom the anticlerical party needed, and they made much of him when they found him. His presence was regarded as the promise of an assured victory. Like another uncircumcized Philistine, it was known that he had been a man of war from his youth up, and it was believed that all the men of Israel when they saw him would flee from him and be afraid. Yet to me his conduct seems base in the extreme. He acted the part of the traitor and the spy. He sold to the enemy the experience which he had gained in the camp of the friends whom he now betrayed and deserted. As yet I have not observed one single feature in his character which bespeaks the noble or the generous; everywhere fraud, duplicity, and treachery. I believe that Englishmen have mistaken their hero.

Wyclif's parliamentary duties did not demand the whole of his time; he could find leisure for other occupations. In the month of November in the year 1368, Archbishop Langham forwarded to the Chancellor of Oxford a list of thirty propositions, which had been pronounced to be erroneous by a meeting of the clergy which the Archbishop had convened for the purpose; and at the same time he directed the Chancellor to see that publication to this effect should be made in the University. Should any one venture to defend or approve these said articles in the schools or elsewhere, openly or privately, it was decreed that he should incur the sentence of public excommunication, which should be pronounced by the said Chancellor.

[16] Life, p. 2.

Appended to each article is the censure which was severally affixed to it by the censors. Langham does not distinctly affirm whether or not these propositions are to be attributed to Wyclif, nor do I venture to do so. I cannot but remark, however, that some of these condemned doctrines were certainly held by him at a later time; and it seems most probable that the entire series is to be referred to him as its author. We may refer their composition to the year 1368,[17] and therefore they represent the Wyclifite heresy in the earliest form in which we are acquainted with it.

To his *Life of Wyclif* Professor Lechler has prefixed a dissertation of sixty pages upon "the English Precursors" of that eminent individual. We are justified in asking in what sense the men who are here introduced are to be understood as Wyclif's precursors. It cannot simply be meant that they preceded him in point of time; for while six writers are mentioned, hundreds of eminent Englishmen have been passed over unnoticed. If this chapter has any meaning, it is intended to prepare the reader to believe that Wyclif's teaching was no new thing, but that it was simply the natural expansion and inevitable continuation of doctrines which many great and good Englishmen had held before he was born. To such an argument, when fairly conducted, there can be no reasonable objection. If a continuous succession of men can be produced who taught Wyclifism from a period long before Wyclif, by all means let them be produced. We admit that there may have been such teachers, but if there were their history is so obscure, that we should be glad to know something more about it.[18] I do not object then to the

[17] Printed from Langham's Register in the Lambeth Library, by Harpsf. *Hist. Wyclif*, p. 720, Wilkins, iii. 75, Hard. vii. 1864.

[18] I have already cited a curious instance of this sort of literature, and again refer to it, because it has anticipated Lechler in bringing in the

introduction of a class bearing the imposing title of the "English Precursors of Wyclif;" what I object to is this—that certain individuals who are here specified should be so described. They are introduced under a false title. Wyclif held doctrines and sanctioned practices which each and all of them, with a single exception, would have indignantly repudiated; and in here attempting to vindicate their character, thus unkindly aspersed, I am but endeavouring to do an act of simple justice.

The first of these unwilling witnesses is Robert Grostête,[19] a man whose character exhibits the union of the most exalted piety with a very wide range of learning. He held the see of Lincoln from A.D. 1235 to 1253, in which year he died. The high estimate in which he is held by Protestant authorities seems to have arisen from an incident which is connected with his administration of his diocese. He refused to admit to a prebendal stall in his Cathedral an Italian who had been provided therewith by Pope Innocent the Fourth, to whom he was nephew. Grostête's act was a bold act, for no one likes to give pain or disappointment, especially to a superior whom he would gladly please. But it involved a principle, and Grostête maintained his ground with an outspoken honesty which has been generally admired. Innocent listened with calmness to the remonstrances thus addressed to him, he did not press the obnoxious nomination, and he made such alterations in the objectionable system

names to which I object. The title of the volume is, "The Protestants' evidence taken out of good records, showing that for fifteen hundred years next after Christ, divers worthy guides of God's Church have in sundry weighty points of religion taught as the Church of England now doth, by Simon Birckbeck." (Lond. 1635, 4to.) This author does not scruple to admit among his Protestant witnesses such writers as St. Anselm, St. Bernard, Peter Lombard, and St. Thomas of Aquin. Modern theorists are a little more cautious.

[19] Lechler, p. 20.

which then prevailed, that the national irritation which had been occasioned by it was allayed.[20]

Upon no stronger foundation than this exercise of jurisdiction is built the assumption that Grostête may be claimed as a doctrinal Protestant. It is not a recent delusion. Yielding to it, Williams, Archbishop of York (1641—1649), and Thomas Barlow (1675—1691), Bishop of Lincoln, severally made preparations for a collected edition of his writings, as likely (so they supposed) to forward the interests of the modern Church of England.[21] History is better understood now-a-days. Grostête's most recent and ablest exponent thus writes of him. If it be meant, says the Rev. Dr. Luard, that Grostête had any tendency towards the doctrinal changes brought about by the Reformation, or that he evidenced any idea of a separation of the Church of England from that of Rome, a more utterly mistaken statement has never been made. He was essentially a man of his own time. To judge of him by the ideas prevalent in the sixteenth century, or to expect to find him influenced by motives similar to those which were influencing men's minds then, is to do him a great injustice. Such a view of his character can only arise from ignorance of the actual facts.[22]

When we come to examine questions of detail upon this subject, the unswerving unity of Grostête's faith becomes conspicuous. Of this Pope Innocent the Fourth was fully convinced, and frequently expresses his conviction. The Bishop had complained to the Pope of certain rectors within the diocese of Lincoln who had taken on themselves the office of sheriff, or bailiff; His Holiness encourages Grostête to be of good courage and to do his

[20] Fœd. i. 262.

[21] Brown's *Fascic.* 396; Tanner, 351; *Biog. Brit.* 4291.

[22] *Rob. Grosseteste Epistolæ.* Edited by H. R. Luard. Lond. 1861, p. xiv.

duty towards them.[23] In his correspondence he speaks with respect and esteem of the Pope, the Cardinals, the Bishops, the clergy, and the monastic orders. He was especially attached to the Franciscans, whom he introduced into Oxford, and on his death he left his large and precious collection of books to their library. His devotion to our Blessed Lady was everywhere conspicuous. He addresses her in these terms, which I translate from one of his French poems. "Hail, holy Mary, chief of humility! Give me, my Lady, strength and goodness, abstinence and peace, love and charity, and (of your grace) holy chastity." Again: "Hail, holy Mary, beloved by the High King, have pity on all who ask pity of you, so long as they are in the world; and in this miserable life take care that God forgets them not."[24] He is equally decisive when he speaks upon the other articles of the Catholic faith, for instance, on the necessity of confession, the doctrine of transubstantiation, on penance, as the means of our reconciliation to God and the Church after sin, and on the obligation of believing all that the Church teaches because the Church teaches it. It is unjust in every sense to bring Grostête forward as having prepared the way for Wyclif. Had that objectionable personage been so fortunate as to have had good Bishop Grostête for his diocesan, the contrast between the two characters would probably have been brought out in a more conspicuous light.

The next authority quoted by Lechler[25] is that of Henry de Bracton, who is introduced as "the greatest lawyer of England in the middle ages, a practical jurist and a learned writer upon English Common Law." The testimony of such a witness in favour of Wyclifism (which is here promised) must be of the highest importance (if it

[23] Ann. iv. ep. 249; Addit. MS. 15,356, fol. 59.
[24] MS. Lamb. 522, f. 161. [25] Lechler, p. 40.

can be produced), and we prepare ourselves to listen to it with anxious surprise. But we are disappointed. Lechler speaks of Bracton with ill-disguised hesitation. We are not furnished with a single quotation from his writings, although the edition in the course of publication by the authority of the Master of the Rolls already fills five bulky volumes. Not a single doctrine is pointed out in which this learned jurist is shown to have differed from his fellow Catholics. It is somewhat confusing to be told, on the same page, too, that he was a "man of a kindred spirit to Grostête, though differing from him on important points," and that upon the question of patronage (the only one here referred to), these two anti-Romanist precursors of the Reformation "would hardly have been of one mind." Altogether our curiosity is excited by the mystery, and we venture to add a few particulars to Lechler's suspicious reticence. What has this great lawyer, this practical jurist, this learned writer on English Common Law, got to tell us upon the subject on which he is brought forward to speak, but on which he hitherto has been so suggestively silent?

Our historian does not tell us, what certainly is an important element in the inquiry, that Bracton was a priest, as well as a Doctor of both Canon and Civil Law. The great work upon which his reputation is founded was completed about the year 1259. He became Archdeacon of Barnstaple in 1264, a preferment which he resigned in the same year, on succeeding to the higher dignity of the Chancellorship of the Cathedral of Exeter. He also held a prebendal stall in the church of Bloseham, which was vacated by his death in 1268.[26] In 1272 we find that two chaplains had been appointed to celebrate Mass daily in the Cathedral for the soul of Henry de Bracton, formerly Chancellor of the said church,

[26] Hardy's *Le Neve*, i. 405, 417; Tanner's *Bibl.* p. 118.

a pious endowment which continued in use until the time of Henry the Eighth.[27]

So much then for the personal history of Henry de Bracton. He enjoyed the confidence and the respect of his sovereign, his bishop, and his fellow canons as long as he lived, and after his death Mass was daily said for his soul. Surely such a man is maligned when he is dragged upon the stage as one of the "Precursors of Wyclif."

But it may be inquired—Do not his writings warrant the charge here brought against him? As they relate exclusively to legal matters of a purely technical character, there is little scope for the discussion of theological questions; but even here my Lord Chief Justice never forgets his character as a priest. If anywhere, the evil spirit of Cæsarism, that especial favourite of Wyclif, might be expected to show itself when the limits of the *Regale* and the *Pontificale* are under discussion. The recent editor of Bracton's great work feels this, and speaking of his author he uses the following words; "Bracton defines the respective spheres of the spiritual and secular jurisdictions without any inclination to favour the former or to disparage the latter. He had very well-defined views respecting the limits of the Papal authority within the realm of England. He thus expresses himself: 'To the Pope and to the priesthood appertain the things which are spiritual; to the King and to the realm appertain the things which are temporal. The Pope therefore has nothing to do with the disposition or settlement of temporal matters; no more have kings or princes to do with spiritual matters.'"[28] Nothing could be clearer. Here Bracton and Wyclif are in direct antagonism to each other. The former assigns to each his own independent jurisdiction, in which he is supreme.

[27] Twiss' edition of Bracton, ii. Pref. lxix. lxxi.; Oliver's *Monast. Exon.* p. 472.

[28] Twiss, Introd. i. xxxix.

The latter confuses and confounds them, and, in the midst of the disorder thus created, seeks to transfer to the State the powers and privileges which in truth are, and always have been, the undoubted property of the Church.

In all other disputed points where he has occasion to touch upon them, Bracton speaks like the usual Catholic priest of his own day and of ours. Had any deviation from the common Faith been discovered in the writings of this eminent lawyer, we most probably should have heard of them. Lechler is too acute and too well read to have permitted them to escape him. None have been produced because none exist.

William de Occam,[29] the next of Wyclif's forerunners, will not detain us long, for his heretical teaching and schismatical conduct are too notorious to be either questioned or exculpated. This "keen and independent thinker on ecclesiastical matters" preceded Wyclif by about half a century. He was educated first at Oxford and afterwards at Paris, in the latter of which Universities he distinguished himself by taking the part of Philip the Fair, King of France, against Pope Boniface the Eighth. From this time onward until its close, his life was one continued act of rebellion. On being excommunicated by Pope John the Twenty-Second, he found a refuge in the Court of the Emperor Louis of Bavaria. The date of his death is uncertain, as also the place of his burial.[30] It is easy

[29] Lechler, 43.

[30] Several of Occam's writings have been published by Goldastus in his *Monarchia* (Hanov. 1611), and by Brown in his *Fasciculus*, ii. 439. He is the only one of the Schoolmen of whom Luther speaks with any respect. A sketch of his life may be seen in Cave, ii. App. 28, and Oudin, iii. 904. See also Dr. Carl Werner, *Die Scholastik des späteren Mittelalters*, Wien, 1883. Wadding (*Annal*, 1347, § 22), says that Occam repented and was reconciled to the Church by letters from Pope Clement the Sixth. See Nat. Alexand. VIII. 122, ed. 1778. But the general impression is that he died

to recognize in Occam an undoubted predecessor of John Wyclif, a man who resembled him not only in his heretical teaching but also in the turbulence of his character, and as such we gladly resign him to the Wyclif Society.

Richard Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh, comes next in order,[31] and is admitted to the dignity of being reckoned a precursor of Wyclif upon no other ground than that he had a quarrel with the Mendicant Orders, against whom he preached some intemperate sermons. Lechler puts the whole controversy so fairly that I gladly follow the abstract which he has given of it. The preacher maintained, in the first place, that our Lord during His sojourn on earth, though always a poor man, not only did not practice begging, but taught that no man should practice it; mendicity therefore ought to have formed no part of the Rule of the Friars Minor. The second assertion of Fitzralph was to the effect, that for the purposes of confession, the parish church is always more suitable for the parishioner than any church or chapel belonging to the begging monks; and that, for hearing confessions, the parish priest is always preferable to the begging monk. In both these respects, says Lechler, "the high-placed dignitary expressed himself in opposition to the Mendicants, to their principles, and to their privileges."

Obviously neither of these questions touches any point of doctrine or morals as far as they affect the subject with which alone we are concerned. The poverty of our Blessed Lord, the interpretation of the Rule of St. Francis, or the customs of the Friars Minor, have no claim upon our attention. Fitzralph disliked the Friars because they

on April 7, 1347, at Munich, being at the time under excommunication. A sentence of papal excommunication against him, as early as 1328, is extant in the Register of Bishop Burghersh of Lincoln. See Tanner, p. 555.

[31] Lechler, p. 54.

begged, so did Wyclif, so have many others since. How does this affect the question? Grostête loved them and patronized them. Was Grostête wrong? And as he and Fitzralph cannot both be right, so we may make our choice and dismiss further inquiry.

Our difficulties increase as we advance, and they attain their highest point when we encounter Bradwardin,[32] Archbishop of Canterbury, among the Precursors of Wyclif. Along with the surprise there is coupled a certain degree of indignation, and we do not care to conceal either of these feelings. Hitherto Bradwardin, the "Doctor Profundus," as he was styled by his admiring contemporaries, has been generally regarded as an able theologian, a sound Catholic, and an honest man;[33] but if there be any truth in the axiom that a man is to be judged of by his company, then this celebrated churchman must forfeit every claim to our respect. We turn for the explanation of the difficulty to Lechler's introductory chapter, where we naturally expect to find some conclusive proof of the assertion, that he was somehow or other a favourer of Wyclif, a statement at once so novel and so hardy. And what is the result? After eight pages of matter, the bulk of which is wide of the question which alone concerns us, we read the following guarded sentence: "We believe," says Dr. Lechler, "that we are not mistaken in maintaining that the principles which lay at the basis of Bradwardin's teaching were not without important influence upon Wyclif,"[34] and even this cautiously-worded assertion is still further modified by the statement that

[32] Lechler, p. 64.

[33] According to his contemporary, Knighton (col. 2600) he was *Famosus præ cæteris clericis totius Christianitatis, in theologia præcipue, similiter et in cæteris scientiis liberalibus.* In the same kindly spirit the reformed Bishop Godwin (seldom the *laudator temporis acti*) writes of our Archbishop: "*Vix alium reperias qui adeo sine ambitu, ac nemine tamen contradicente, archiepiscopale solium conscenderit* (p. 111).

[34] P. 65.

Wyclif strongly opposes some of the dogmatic views of Bradwardin.

We resent this way of treating a subject which is too solemn to tolerate such a liberty. Is the Leipsic professor aware that his high reputation as a scholar will induce by far the larger portion of his English readers to accept almost any assertion, however hardy, which he may be pleased to make, so long as it falls in with their prejudices? And knowing England as he does, ought not he to have been careful how he made an attempt to ruin the fair fame of an Archbishop who until now has stood high in public estimation? Hitherto Bradwardin has been spoken of with esteem and respect by Catholic and Protestant alike. He passes unscathed through the fiery ordeal of Fox's *Acts and Monuments*. Even the German Professor himself is constrained to admit that the spirit by which the Archbishop was animated is worthy of all praise. He sees in him a moral pathos, a lofty earnestness of Christian piety, which cannot fail to make the deepest impression.[35] And he points out no heretical teaching and suggests none. How then could such a man be numbered as one of the precursors of Wyclif?

In order that Bradwardin may appear in his true character two things become necessary; in the first place we desire to have a short statement of the leading events of his life, and in the next place to know something definite as to the doctrines which he taught. I shall endeavour to furnish both of these with all becoming brevity.

Thomas Bradwardin was born about the year 1290 at Hartfield, at no great distance from East Grinstead, in the county of Sussex. Of his parentage and early history nothing is known. He was educated at Merton

[35] P. 68.

College, Oxford, where he obtained the reputation of being an accomplished scholar and a devout Christian. Preferment of various kinds flowed in upon him.[36] Edward the Third appointed him his confessor, in which capacity he followed that King into France, where by his presence and exhortations he succeeded in mitigating some of the horrors of the war which had broken out between the two countries. In 1346 he was one of the commissioners appointed by the King to negotiate a peace with France.[37] On the death of Archbishop Stratford in 1348, the Chapter of Canterbury unanimously chose Bradwardin as his successor; but another ecclesiastic was appointed, the King being anxious to retain near his own person the services of such a valued director. The metropolitan see, however, was speedily vacated by the demise of Ufford, and Bradwardin now succeeded to the vacant dignity. He did not enjoy it long. The King wrote to the Pope on his behalf; the Bull for his appointment bears date June 19, 1349; he was consecrated at Avignon early in July, the temporalities were restored on the 22nd of August, and on the 26th of that same month he died, before having been enthroned.[38]

From the personal history of the individual we pass to the teaching and spirit which are exhibited in his theological writings. Lechler would have us believe that Bradwardin departed in certain points from the received doctrine of the Catholic Church, for no better reason than because the Archbishop insists earnestly and frequently upon the grace of God as the one source of

[36] See Rot. Rom. 22—24, Edward III. June 10, m. 2. Bradwardin was Proctor of the University in 1325 (Newcourt, i. 112; Tanner, 120), Canon of Lincoln in 1333 (Le Neve, ii. 113; Newcourt, i. 112), Prebendary of Cadington Minor, and Chancellor of London in 1337 (Le Neve, ii. 359, 372), and Archdeacon of Norwich in 1347 (Le Neve, ii. 479; Tanner, 120).

[37] Fœd. iii. 92.

[38] Le Neve, i. 18; Goodwin, 111; Angl. Sacr. i. 42, 43; Newcourt, i. 112.

man's salvation, and upon the necessity of a corresponding holiness of life as resulting from it. The whole of Bradwardin's bulky folio, *De Causa Dei*, rests upon these two principles. How by so doing he separates himself from the faithful members of the Catholic Church, and joins Wyclif and the other dwellers in the tents of the children of Moab, is nowhere explained by Dr. Lechler; in exculpation of whom, however, I beg to quote the words with which he sums up the character of this great scholar. It was by no means Bradwardin's intention, writes the repentant German professor, to place himself in antagonism to the Church of Rome. On the contrary, he declares expressly his stedfast belief in the doctrinal authority of that Church. He submits his writings to her judgment; it is for her to determine what is orthodox in the questions which he has investigated. He wishes with all his heart to have her support where he does battle with the enemies of God; where he errs he desires her correction, and where he is in the right to have her confirmation.[39]

The only addition which I wish to make to this conclusive passage is to observe, that Bradwardin carefully insists that our sole Master, Jesus Christ, still teaches from the boat of St. Peter, which is the Church of Rome and he admits that in it shall remain the authority and *magisterium* of all Christian doctrine until the end of the world.[40]

The last of "the English Precursors of Wyclif" is the author, whoever he may have been, of that remarkable poem which is known as "The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman."[41] It certainly is well worthy of the thoughtful attention which Lechler and his editor invite us to bestow upon it. It deserves a

[39] Lechler, p. 70.

[40] See Bradwardin's Preface, and p. 876.

[41] Lechler, 70.

careful perusal, as exhibiting a vivid picture of the vices and defects of all classes of society, as they presented themselves to a man who was thoroughly in earnest in desiring their reformation. But we object to the use here made of it by attempting to connect it with the peculiar doctrines of Wyclif. Lechler himself is conscious of the radical distinction in tone, spirit, and object, which separates the one writer from the other, as will appear in the course of the present observations. But before going further, I wish to touch upon a preliminary difficulty.

If Lewis, followed herein by nearly every subsequent writer, be correct in assigning the year 1324 as the probable date of Wyclif's birth, and if we accept the year 1332 as that in which the author of the poem about the allegorical Plowman first saw the light,[42] then Longland must have been the younger man of the two by about eight years. We would ask then, how can he in fairness be reckoned as one of Wyclif's precursors? Longland must have been Wyclif's pupil instead of being his master. The poem, written by this shepherd of the Malvern Hills, went through three editions, so to speak, which may be referred severally to the years 1362, 1377, and 1380—1390. Obviously, therefore, if we are concerned with the poem in any of its forms, it is only with the earliest.

I will not permit it to detain us long, and that for several reasons. I have already mentioned one, the fact that here Longland is out of date, and is chronologically inadmissible into Lechler's series of pre-Wyclifite Protestants. In the next place, the poem in no respect harmonizes with Wyclif where Wyclif dissents from any of the doctrines then universally accepted. "Longland did not attack a single doctrine of the Church," writes Lechler, with laudable inconsistency; who further points out, that "he assumes without question the whole body

[42] *Id.* Introduction, p. xiv.

of church doctrine."[43] Dean Milman, in his *History of Latin Christianity*,[44] sees in him "no disciple, no precursor of Wyclif in his broader religious views, he is no dreamy speculative theologian. He acquiesces, seemingly in unquestioning faith, in the creed and in the usages of the Church. He is not profane but reverent as to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. Pilgrimages, penances, oblations on the altar, absolution, he does not reject. On Transubstantiation, the Real Presence, and the Sacraments he is almost silent; but his silence is that of submission, not of doubt." Our last quotation speaks the same language.[45] Longland, says the Rev. W. Warburton, "is no precursor or forestaller of Wyclif, for he never attacks the doctrine of the Papacy, but only its social and political abuses."

Here then, after having lingered too long in his company, I bid farewell to John Wyclif for a time. Looking back upon his history as we have traced it, it appears that his condition at this period was far from prosperous. He had made an enemy of his Archbishop, he could not have stood well with his ecclesiastical superiors, he had been defeated in a long and costly law-suit, and no probability of success seemed open to him. But he had entered upon a new occupation. He had passed into the service of the Court and the Parliament, by whom he was henceforth to be employed in directing the attack which they were making upon the Pope, the bishops and the clergy, towards all of whom he entertained strong feelings of personal hostility. In one word, he had shown himself to be a traitor and a heretic. In our next chapter we shall see how he brought these principles into action, and the purposes for which he employed them.

[43] Lechler, 75, 78.

[44] Vol. vi. p. 536, quoted in Skeat's Introd. (to A. text), Oxf. 1869, p. xix.

[45] Edward the Third, p. 255.

CHAPTER III.

Wyclif's Parliamentary Duties—National discontent—Wyclif's Mission to Bruges—Proceedings against him—The Insurrection of the men of Essex and Kent—London plundered—Murder of the Archbishop—Progress and Conclusion of the Outbreak—How far Wyclif was responsible.

FROM the moment that he became "the peculiar clerk" of the English Sovereign, Wyclif entered upon a new phase of his existence, of which we know very little, and respecting which therefore it is necessary that we should speak with all becoming reserve. Yet he does not escape our observation so entirely as to become absolutely invisible; for he himself has drawn aside a corner of the curtain behind which he is hidden so far as to let us see how he is occupied in his new avocation. The paper which he drew up for the guidance of the anticlerical party, with which he now identified himself in the debate about the payments claimed by the Pope, shows us what his new masters expected him to do for them. And it shows something more than this; it shows that he was contented to do it, and to accept the reward, such as it was, which was given for this dishonourable employment. He did not work for nothing. The advantages which his new office held out more than reconciled him to the disgrace which went hand in hand with it. At this we are not surprised, for his previous history shows him to have been a man upon whose conscience the duties and obligations of ordinary life would sit so lightly as to occasion

him small discomfort when self-interest demanded that they should be disregarded. He was now on the high road to obtain the emoluments and honours which were at the disposal of the Crown, so that he became to a great extent indifferent to the approval of the Bishops, perhaps even of the Pope himself. He could now gratify those feelings of hostility to the Church and the clergy at large which have been ascribed to him—correctly, as I think—by more than one of his contemporaries. These exhibit themselves but too plainly in the ill-disguised rancour, the covert insinuations, and the open attacks which are everywhere so painfully conspicuous in his later writings. Wyclif seems to have entered upon the discharge of his new duties with zeal and energy, and, as far as we can judge, he did not eat the bread of idleness. He occupied a high position and he expected an ample reward. We trace his hand in the different measures which from time to time demanded the attention of the Parliament, to the consideration of which we now invite the attention of the reader.

The position of affairs was not encouraging. The reign of Edward the Third, after a succession of triumphs almost unexampled in our history, was doomed to end in the humiliation of the people and the disgrace of the Sovereign. The splendid successes which had attended his arms in France and Scotland faded out of sight without having conferred any permanent advantage upon the nation; while the enormous sums which had been so uselessly lavished upon the armies which had gone forth to die in France and Spain had drained off from home the wealth of England and the best of her population. More than one unproductive harvest had raised the necessities of life to famine prices, and they were succeeded by the great pestilences which devastated the realm in 1361 and again in 1369.[1] To add to these

[1] See Walsingham, i. 296, 309; Knyghton, 2626.

troubles, hostilities with France were resumed, and of necessity led to a considerable outlay of the public money. The nation was impoverished, and as a consequence discontented, and it received with an ill-grace the application which was made by the Pope for the arrears of the annuity due to him. From the discussion of financial questions Parliament proceeded to inquire into other matters connected with public business, and finally was induced to organize an attack upon the clergy, which in 1371 led to results of considerable significance. It seems to me that in this movement the influence of Wyclif is distinctly perceptible.

In this Parliament "all the earls and barons and the commonalty of England" presented a petition to the King, in which—after reminding him that the "men of Holy Church" by whom the government of the realm had for long been carried on, were not in all cases liable to be judged as other men were, whence great mischiefs and damages had arisen in times past, and more might happen in time to come, to the great prejudice of the kingdom —they requested that if laymen who were sufficient and able could be found, they, and none other, from henceforth should be made Chancellor, Treasurer, Clerk of the Privy Seal, Baron of the Exchequer, or any other great officer of State. To this request the King made answer that he would consider the matter and discuss it with his council. The result showed that the ecclesiastical party was the weaker. Sir John Knyvet was appointed Chancellor in the place of William of Wykeham, Sir Richard Scrope ousted Thomas de Brantingham, as Treasurer of the Exchequer, and in furtherance of the same policy the entire Privy Council of the realm passed into the hands of laymen.[2] No more significant intimation could be given as to the spirit in which the government of England

[2] Rot. Parl. ii. 304, 309; Le Neve, i. 372.

was to be carried on for the future. These sentiments find their expression in a small treatise written by Wyclif, as yet unprinted, and of which no copy seems to exist in England.[3] In it he attacked the mission of the Papal Legate who had been sent by Gregory the Eleventh to collect the sums due to Rome, although this individual had obtained the royal safe-conduct before landing and had taken an oath by which he pledged himself not to infringe upon the rights of the Sovereign.

In this treatise Wyclif suggested that the Papal Nuncio had committed perjury, and that the oath and the office were contradictory. One of its distinguishing features is its frequent reference to the English Parliament, of whose feelings and intentions the writer constitutes himself the representative. It is exactly such a paper as we should expect from the pen of "the King's peculiar clerk." He enlarges upon the duty of providing "pious foundations in behalf of the Church and the poor," as if that duty were inconsistent with another duty, the duty of observing earlier obligations, such as those which had for long existed between Edward and the Papacy. To elevate the temporal power at the expense of the spiritual was the aim of the secularists of the age, and Wyclif did his best to forward the onward progress of the movement.

In the year 1374 another step in the same direction had already been made, by the appointment of Wyclif as a royal commissioner to treat with certain Papal Nuncios who were expected to arrive at Bruges during the course of the summer. The English delegates were John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, Simon Sudbury, Bishop of London, the Bishop of Bangor, and certain other personages of inferior rank. Wyclif would seem to have attended in virtue of his position as "the King's peculiar

[3] See Lechler, p. 148, to whom I am indebted for all I know about this tractate.

clerk," and in that capacity his duty was to supply the English Commissioners with such arguments as might overthrow the Papal claims, should any such be advanced. The Embassy was provided with authority to conclude such a treaty as should best secure the honour of the Church, and preserve the rights of the English Crown and kingdom.[4]

In this capacity Wyclif embarked in London for Bruges on July 27, 1374, and he remained in Flanders until the conclusion of the conference, returning about the middle of the following September. We are in ignorance as well respecting the subjects which were there and then discussed by the Commissioners as the conclusions at which they arrived. It is probable, however, that the meeting led to one important result; it brought together two individuals who, from that time forward, pursued the same line of policy, and were united by the common bond of hostility to the Holy See. John of Lancaster and John Wyclif had much in common. Both desired to introduce into England nearly the same doctrines and usages as those which, at a later period, were systematized by Luther and Calvin, Martyr, Bucer, and Cranmer. Yet on the other hand the Convention of Bruges was not without better results. It contributed in some degree to bring about arrangements, which tended for a time to mitigate the bitterness with which the political party in the English Parliament regarded every movement on the side of the Roman Curia. Gregory the Eleventh made certain concessions, which were intended to meet the more urgent of the complaints which had been brought under his notice;[5] and it was

[4] Fœd. vol. iii. p. ii. 1,007. Lewis, p. 304. The allowance made to him from the Treasury for the expenses of the journey was a handsome one, being at the rate of twenty shillings a day. He received in all £52 2s. 3d.

[5] *Id.* p. 1037.

hoped that a better understanding had been attained by the compromise. This, however, would not have satisfied the intentions of the more extreme party among the parliamentarian agitators, whose progress I am attempting to illustrate, of whom Wyclif was the most conspicuous; and again we trace his presence in the Parliament which met in the month of April, 1376.

This Parliament began its attack upon the Holy See by presenting a memorial to the Sovereign, in which it attempted to show that the impoverished condition of the realm was the necessary result of its connection with Rome. It complained that prebends and other benefices founded by the Kings of England had been given by the Pope to aliens, who keep no hospitality, did not reside, and spent nothing in the neighbourhood whence these revenues arise, although these benefices were so endowed that they should be employed in support of the honour of God, in the maintenance of churches, in hospitality, in alms, and other works of charity. So long as these good customs existed the nation prospered, but covetousness and simony had come in and the result had been fatal to the country.

The Parliament went on to speak, in violent language, about the amount of gold carried out of England by the agents of those foreign ecclesiastics who had been provided with English benefices, through the corrupt liberality of the Holy Father. It estimated the sums thus collected and sent abroad at twenty thousand marks a year, and it urged the passing of a law which should prevent the residence among us of any such collector for the future upon pain of death. Upon each article in its long array of complaints, this petition enlarged with bitter vehemence; and it concluded by assuring the King that his loving subjects who thus addressed him were moved only by an honest zeal for the glory of God and the honour of

His Holy Church. Measures of a practical nature were suggested, the acceptance of which was urged upon the King; and all was done by the more extreme section of the agitators which a feverish ingenuity could suggest, in order to bring about a collision between England and the Holy Father,—a collision which it was hoped would end in a separation.[6]

The King endeavoured to allay the agitation. He replied that he was in amicable communication with Rome upon the grievances of which his Parliament had complained, and that the subject should not be forgotten. This reply did not satisfy the revolutionary party, which, in the January of 1377, renewed the agitation with increased vehemence, in the exhibition of which, if I am not mistaken, I again recognize the influence of "the King's peculiar clerk."[7] But the growing infirmities, mental and bodily, of the English Sovereign held matters for a time in suspense; and the death of Edward the Third, which happened in the course of the year just mentioned, threw the management of affairs into a different channel, and for a time at least seemed to have acted as a curb upon the further development of the growing heresy.

As early as the month of April, in the year 1374 (shortly, therefore, before his mission to Bruges), John Wyclif had been presented to the rectory of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, by the King, into whose hands the right of presentation had lapsed, in consequence of the

[6] Rot. Parl. ii. 337, seq.

[7] I do this with the greater confidence since I may here fall back upon the authority of Lechler, who writes as follows: "The proposals of the Good Parliament of 1376, the echoes of which we still catch in 1377, are of such a character, that I am bold to maintain that they afford strong evidence of the influence of Wycliff" (page 151.) The difference between us is, that the line of conduct, which to the German professor is commendable, to me seems base, treacherous, and worthy of all censure.

minority of the patron, one of the family of Ferrars of Groby.[8] Wyclif occupied the honourable position of incumbent of Lutterworth when he was summoned by the Convocation, which met in February, 1377, to appear before it, in order that he might there answer certain charges which had been brought against him as the teacher of heretical opinions. The meeting was evidently intended to be a trial of strength between the two rival parties, between the adherents of the revolutionary Duke of Lancaster and the Conservative Archbishop of Canterbury and his episcopal brethren. The Duke accepted it in this sense, and he resolved to support the man who had been marked out for censure as his representative; but he did so in a manner and a spirit which were equally offensive and illegal. Accompanied by Lord Henry Percy, then Grand Marshall of England, and supported by a large body of armed retainers, the Duke forced his way into the Lady Chapel of St. Paul's Cathedral, in which the clergy had assembled. The Marshall addressed the Archbishop in unbecoming terms, in which he was seconded by Lancaster, who soon resorted to threats and insults. Certain of the citizens of London, who stood near, overhearing this language, cried out that they would not permit their Bishop to be treated thus disrespectfully, and the feeling on both sides grew so embittered, that an immediate collision was apprehended. Happily this was avoided, and the meeting broke up before a word of argument, of accusation, or defence, had been uttered by either the accuser or the accused.[9]

The citizens of London, who thus had stood forward in defence of their Bishop, were speedily made to pay the price of their loyalty. On the very day of this stormy meeting in Convocation a motion was made in Parliament to the effect, that the Mayor of London should be deprived

[8] *Lewis*, p. 44. [9] Wals. i. 359.

of the government of the city, which should be transferred to a nominee of the obnoxious Duke of Lancaster. The indignation of the citizens, thus attacked on a point respecting which they naturally were most sensitive, now rose to fever heat, and a wild tumult was the result. The mob was with difficulty prevented from demolishing the Duke's palace, which was saved only by the generous intervention of the Bishop of London, the man who had just before been insulted.[10] The turmoil, however, had been productive of one result. It had diverted for a time the inquiry into Wyclif's heretical opinions; and so had encouraged him to believe he was safe, not only for the present but the future, under the protection of the great Duke of Lancaster.

In this supposition Wyclif was mistaken. The heresies which he had taught for long, and with increasing audacity, could no longer escape without attracting public notice; and now they fell under the cognizance of the Bishops, whose duty and privilege it is to watch over the Divine deposit of the truth. These heretical opinions of his, either propounded by himself in the University, or extracted from his writings, had been noted and transmitted to Rome; and the Holy Father, dealing with the charge according to the usual forms of ecclesiastical law, ruled that further inquiries should be made into the truth or falsity of the accusation. Five Bulls were issued upon the subject, which directed the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London to ascertain privately whether certain articles (nineteen in number) contained in a schedule attached to the document, had really been propounded by the accused; and if this should prove to have been the case, they were told to forward to Rome a notice to that effect, and then wait for further instructions. Pending this interval,

[10] Wals. i. 325.

however, the Pope ordered that Wyclif should be detained in prison. The other Bulls contain directions as to how the prelates should act under certain circumstances. Throughout the whole of these instructions to the Bishops, the King, and the University of Oxford, the Pope assumed, as he naturally might do, that each and all would act in support of the civil and ecclesiastical law of the kingdom.[11]

Although these five Bulls bear the date of May 22, 1377, no action resulted from them until the end of that year. In the meantime King Edward the Third had died; this change in the Government, and various other political causes, seem to have contributed to the delay in the execution of the Papal writs. When at last they were put into operation, they were not carried out in the exact terms in which they had been conceived. Wyclif, instead of being thrown into prison, was cited to appear within the space of thirty days before the Commissioners in St. Paul's Church in London. Apparently it was considered impolitic, perhaps dangerous, to proceed against "the King's peculiar clerk" with that degree of stringency which at first had been intended.

At the time and place appointed Wyclif presented himself to defend the nineteen theses which had been condemned by the Papal Court. This he did in a written document which is still extant.[12] The proceedings of the day were interrupted, however, by two events which effectually barred the administration of justice, and which at the same time show the extent of the influence behind which the heretic screened himself. The Princess of Wales sent a message to the court forbidding the Commissioners to pronounce any final judgment against the accused; and the citizens of

[11] *Id.* p. 345; *Fascic. Zizan.* p. 242.

[12] Walsingham, i. 357; Lewis, p. 832. See also *Fascic. Zizan.* p. 245.

London forced their way into the place of meeting (although it was the Archbishop's chapel in Lambeth Palace), where their conduct was so violent and so threatening, that the meeting was brought to an abrupt conclusion: a measure which we cannot but regret as being at once undignified and unsatisfactory.

This second failure in the administration of justice, even more ominously startling than the first, became still more so when taken in connection with the events by which it was followed. Shortly after the turbulent gathering at Lambeth, Gregory the Eleventh died,[18] and then followed the great schism, which apparently would have overthrown the Church had not that Church been founded upon the Rock. This combination of evil circumstances contributed, more than aught else, to the progress of the heresy of Wyclif. The disorders which it introduced into the State crippled the action of the Bishops: and during the anarchy which may be dated from this period, error made easy and rapid progress in the overthrow of the old faith of England. While men slept, the enemy came and sowed the tares in God's field, and from that period both have been growing together, and will continue to do so until the harvest.

From this time forward Wyclif is known to us chiefly as a man who had a legal claim to be considered as a parish priest. He left his comfortable rectory only when some urgent occasion demanded, but with comparatively few exceptions Lutterworth formed his chief residence. Yet we must not permit ourselves to imagine that the latter years of his life were spent in quiet repose, much less in dreamy idleness. On the contrary, they were marked by a restless energy of action which surprises us not only by its ceaseless activity, but also by the facility with which it originated and carried on to their completion

[18] A.D. 1378, March 27. See Raynaldi, ad an. § 3.

various schemes, all of which were subservient to the gigantic project of evil to which he henceforth devoted the declining years of his existence.

We have seen how Wyclif influenced the English Court, and how various members of the royal family took him under their protection, and stood between him and the punishment which otherwise would have been inflicted upon him. We have also seen how the Parliament of England, under his direction, dealt harshly and unjustly with the English clergy and the Pope. Let us now see how the peasantry and the lower classes generally interpreted his teaching and reduced it into practice.

The principles of insubordination and lawlessness which are so prominent in the doctrines of John Wyclif, seemed to find a ready acceptance with the uneducated masses of the people. They would easily understand his arguments when he told them they were at liberty to form their own opinions and to act upon them. Ignorant men listen with complaisance to the voice which assures them that they are sufficiently learned to judge for themselves, and that any one who denies this self-evident truth is an enemy, and ought to be dealt with as such. Every one, said the Evangelical Doctor, as he best knows his own wants, so he best knows his own interests. He told them that hitherto the labouring man had been held in bondage, and that the time had come for him to vindicate his own independence; that he was wiser than his teachers, and no longer needed their instruction. Such arguments as these produced their unavoidable result. The respect of the people for constituted authority, whether in Church or State, once broken down, every innovation in religion and politics was easy; and we cannot wonder when the annals of our country tell us that even during the lifetime of Wyclif his followers broke out

into open insurrection, and made the practical results of his teaching known by fire, rapine, and bloodshed.

The descent from order to insubordination was gradual but natural. From an early stage of its existence the mischief of Wyclif's teaching had shown itself by a diminished attendance at Mass and a growing disregard for the holy sacraments. Until the time of which we are speaking, the church had been the House of God, to which His children had resorted as a privilege and a blessing. The sacraments had been always regarded as the Divinely-appointed channels for the communication of His grace through the ministry of the Catholic priest. All this had now come to an end. The clergy were regarded as a cage full of unclean birds, the church was a house of abomination, the sacraments were a fraud; there was nothing true in this old-fashioned Christianity, and the sooner it was thrust out of sight so much the better for the poor man, whom it had cheated, misled, and plundered. All the authority with which it had hitherto been invested was now transferred to the Lollard preacher.

Political causes, too, favoured the growth of the movement. The inglorious end of the reign of the Third Edward, followed by the unsettled condition of affairs, as well abroad as at home, during the whole of the unhappy rule of his successor, Richard the Second, occupying between them what we may reckon as an entire generation of human life, were periods admirably adapted for the seed-time and the growth of a popular heresy. A long schism in the Papacy augmented the evil. Under such influences ecclesiastical discipline grew weak, for the culprit would not accept it, and the priest could not enforce it. A powerful and active political body among the nobles in the Court of England made its profit by humbling the Bishops, who did not dare to exercise the

authority with the administration of which they had been intrusted. Theories as to the rights of humanity, as to the origin of government, as to the limits of the obedience which the subject owes to the Sovereign, no less crude than dangerous, grew up among the working men; and the meetings and discussions which followed naturally increased the irritation and tended to the growth and diffusion of the mischief. Each of these elements of disunion was in turn reflected back upon the other, so that at last by their combined agency a condition of things was brought about which augured ill for the tranquillity of England.

The dissatisfied commons needed a leader, and they found one in the person of John Ball, a priest who for many years past had embraced the doctrines of Wyclif. He it was who, according to Thomas of Walsingham, monk of St. Albans[14] (whose narrative I here follow, for the most part, as a contemporaneous authority), he it was who beat out the scheme and encouraged the rebellion. A project of this bulk and boldness was not formed and concerted upon the sudden; it seems to have been no less than twenty years under Ball's manipulation. During this interval it had been his business to debauch the understandings of the vulgar, making them believe that servitude and villeinage were states never intended by God and nature; that this condition of disadvantage was imposed upon them by the wealthy, and kept up by the injustice and ambition of their superiors. Christians ought to assert their native liberty. All men were equal at first, and they ought to continue so. Such persons as had engrossed more than their due share should relinquish part of their ill-gotten wealth; and if they refused so reasonable a reformation, they were to be made

[14] Published under the authority of the Master of the Rolls, 1863, 1864. 2 vols. Ball's history is given at vol. ii. 32, 33, 34.

to submit by force; for where nature was equal, power and condition ought to be equal too. From these general principles Ball deduced certain practical conclusions. He asked his hearers not to forget the liberties to which they were born. He gave them a discharge from paying tithes; he preached strongly against the authority of the clergy, and he told them they were under no obligations either to Church or State. In other matters he followed the most plausible of Wyclif's opinions. It is easy to understand that the influence of such a man would soon make itself felt in violence and bloodshed.

As Ball promulgated these opinions far and wide, he soon fell under the censure of his ecclesiastical superiors, whose monitions he disregarded. When he was restrained from preaching in a church, the people flocked about him in the streets and ran after him to conventicles in the fields. At last, being excommunicated, and refusing to move for absolution, he was apprehended and imprisoned by order of the Archbishop of Canterbury.[15] As he was being carried to the gaol at Maidstone he told the people that he would soon be set at liberty by an army of twenty thousand men. The time had now come

[15] He was shut up in the Archbishop's prison at Maidstone. Bishops and the Abbots of the greater monasteries had the power of confining refractory subjects. A prison at Tynemouth Priory is noticed in Dugd. *Mon.* iii. 309. Frequent mention of such a prison is made in the Rule of St. Saviour, published in *Aungier's History of Syon Monastery*. In *Prynne's Records*, vol. iii., may be seen a letter of William, Abbot of Bindon, to King Edward the First (June, 1290), requesting that John de Wymford, a fugitive monk, may be arrested and handed over to the keeping of those persons who are charged with the care of his soul, "according to the discipline of our Order." A secular priest having fallen into grievous sin, the following penance was imposed upon him by his Bishop: To fast every Friday for a twelvemonth on bread, vegetables, and small beer; every week to recite in the church the entire Psalter, and to pray for the forgiveness of his sins with contrition of heart. See Oliver's *Monast. Exon.* pp. vii. 3.

when his Kentish followers undertook the accomplishment of this prophecy.

The continued mismanagement of the State accelerated the outbreak which had long been impending; and after some warnings, which ought not to have been neglected, the populace broke out into an open insurrection. Besides the official State Papers which exist in considerable numbers bearing upon the history of this event, we possess two independent narratives which illustrate it very fully, one written by a monk of St. Albans, the other by a Canon Regular of Leicester.[16] As was natural, each historian deals chiefly with the incidents which occurred in his own immediate neighbourhood. We cannot do better than make them the basis of our own account of some of the events which took place during this popular outbreak. We begin with the narrative of the monk of St. Albans,[17] which has the claim to priority, since it tells us how the disciples of Wyclif conducted themselves in their dealings with the highest authorities within the realm of England.

This historian introduces us in the first place to the excited mob of bondsmen and peasants which flocked up to London from the flats and marshes of Essex. Dull-brained as they generally were, upon the present occasion all were fired by lofty aspirations; all were to be lords; henceforth there were to be no more servants. The movement began on a small scale, but it speedily assumed larger dimensions, for the originators did not

[16] Henry de Knighton, Canon Regular of Leicester, wrote his Chronicle during the reign of Richard the Second. See Tanner's *Bibl.* p. 459.

[17] I quote the following passage from M. Riley's Preface to the late edition of this Chronicle (Lond. 1863, vol. i. p. x): "To a great extent this history is immediately derived from an older compilation, once belonging to the Abbey of St. Albans, made probably between the years 1377 and 1392, at which date it closes." The details given in the text, therefore, are those furnished by an eyewitness.

conceal their intention of making short work with such as neglected to attend at the place and time appointed. Defaulters were told that their property, whatever it was, should be forfeited, their houses burnt, and as for themselves, their heads should be cut off. All labour was disregarded, the usual work in the field was abandoned, the plough was idle, and the seed-time passed by unheeded. Men left their farms and their families in obedience to the summons of these self-constituted leaders. The mob soon amounted to five thousand men, and a ragged regiment they were, worthy to have passed muster at Coventry. Some of them had no better arms than a thick stick; a few carried rusty swords, others were provided with axes, and lastly came a troop armed only with an old-fashioned bow and a single arrow with a solitary feather upon it. Out of a thousand of such ragamuffins scarce one single person was armed like a soldier. Yet numerically they were strong, and they thought themselves invincible. Persuaded that nothing could resist them, they joined the expedition in crowds, scarcely knowing why, and each man determined to win a kingdom for himself. Before setting out they sent messengers into Kent, who invited their fellows in that county to meet them in London, where they could help each other to obtain liberty and abolish evil usages and objectionable payments.[18]

The men of Kent were not slow in accepting the invitation of their friends in Essex, profiting by whose experience they followed the same line of action with the same results. They first tried their prentice hand upon a company of pilgrims who were on their way to Canterbury, whom they compelled to take an oath, of which one clause only is worthy of being quoted. It was to the effect that they would do their best to procure

[18] Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.* i. 454.

the abrogation of all taxes, except the payment of a single fifteenth. Evidently they were inexperienced in their trade, but we shall find that they speedily improved by practice.

The rising in Kent soon became more general and more enthusiastic than that in Essex, and in every sense it was more formidable and practically more dangerous. Deprived of the presence of its late idol, John Ball, it was now under the guidance of a leader, named Wat the Tyler, to whose sway it yielded a ready obedience. As it increased in strength it increased in violence; so that ere long men discovered what were its doctrines and how they were promulgated. The law-loving and peaceful population of the districts through which these Kentish marauders passed on their road to London, fled before them in terror, scared not only by the report of what they had done already, but by the threats of what they were about to execute. The mob had one strongly-marked prejudice, it hated law and everything connected with it, especially the men by whom the law was enforced. They had laid it down as a political axiom that so long as there were lawgivers there could be no liberty; and they resolved to act according to the inference which naturally arose from this maxim. Wherever the Kentish men could lay their hands upon judge or juror, from the highest to the lowest, they made these unfortunates shorter by the head. The pithy form in which they expressed their theory and the zeal with which they put it into exercise afforded great delight to these simple-minded rustics. Aiming at consistency and thoroughness, the next step was to destroy every memorial of the reign of this hateful legalism. If it were a badge of tyranny, as it undoubtedly was, then the legal document which embodied it was no less so, and therefore as such was doomed to destruction. They acted accordingly; they

tore into shreds or burnt into ashes every title-deed, every roll, every charter, on which they could lay their hands. Then they rose in their own opinion as the guardians of the rights and liberties of the people. As they marched onwards to the doomed city their numbers rapidly increased in vice and violence. They were joined by volunteers from all quarters, villeins, bond tenants, and country clowns, every runaway apprentice who had robbed his master's till, every fraudulent debtor who could not pay the score which he had contracted, every ill-doer who had fled from before the face of the bailiff, was welcomed as a friend and treated as a brother. When at last they halted on Blackheath they are said to have amounted to one hundred thousand men; and so confident were they in their triumph that they sent a message to the King inviting him to come to them that he might hear the terms which they had to propose for his acceptance.

Great was the consternation of the inhabitants of London, and great were the divisions among the members of the Royal Council. Of these some advised the young King to grant the rebels the interview which they demanded, while others were still more urgent in dissuading him from trusting his life among such a lawless assemblage. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Treasurer of England took this latter view of the subject, and expressed themselves so earnestly that their opinion influenced that of the King. His refusal to venture among the mob was naturally attributed to the influence of these ministers, and the mob vowed that they should be made to pay for their opinions with their heads. After this delay at Blackheath the march to London was resumed. As they passed through Southwark they broke open the Marshalsea Prison, and freed all the prisoners, whom they compelled (not unwillingly)

to join their ranks. The Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City wished to close the gates, but were overawed and hindered by their own populace, whose attitude showed that they meant to make common cause with the enemy outside the walls. It was clear to all that ere long, unless some prompt measures were adopted, the English capital would be at the mercy of the insurgents.

Hitherto these Kentishmen had preserved a certain amount of good discipline in their own ranks, and had acted with honesty towards the tradesmen with whom they had dealt on their line of march up to London. They had taken nothing by violence, but had paid a reasonable price for what they wanted. The change for the worse which now took place is possibly to be attributed to the presence and advice of their old friend John Ball, the Wyclifite preacher, who once more found himself in kindred society. When we last heard of him he was an inmate of the Archbishop's prison at Maidstone, but he was not forgotten by his former disciples and admirers. When they halted on Blackheath they sent off a party to liberate their beloved chaplain. The envoys broke open the prison and freed this victim of clerical tyranny, who gladly accompanied them back to the main body of the insurgents. Ball inaugurated his office by preaching to the mob, and he delighted his audience by selecting for his text the well-known proverbial couplet—

> When Adam delved and Eve span
> Where was then the gentleman?

In treating of this subject he put his hearers in mind that originally all men were equal, and that as long as they were governed by the laws of nature they kept upon even ground and maintained this blessed parity. All distinctions of dignity, said he, are the inventions of

oppression, tricks to cheat people out of their liberty; in short, a conspiracy of the rich against the poor. Therefore, to make this project significant and to do themselves right, he advised them to kill the lords spiritual and temporal, the judges, the lawyers, and all pen and inkhorn men, who belonged either to Westminster Hall or the Court Christian. These fellows, said he, are all of them enemies to the liberty of the Commons, and are not to be endured. When they are dispatched servitude and poverty will die with them. He reminded his hearers that God had now put into their hands the power to liberate themselves, and that it was their business to take advantage of this opportunity, the like of which if neglected might never return.

Excited by this address the mob caught the spirit of their High Priest. They declared that he was a prophet sent to them from Heaven, and that he was the only person fitted to be at once Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England. A council of war was held, in which it was decided that the two functionaries who at this time held these offices should be put to death, in order to clear the road for the promotion of Ball; and that certain other obnoxious personages whom they had marked out, should be executed without the formality of a trial. Having done this, they issued a proclamation in the name of the King and Commons, making no mention either of the Bishops or the Temporal Nobility. Thus passed Thursday, the 12th of June, 1381, being the great Festival of Corpus Christi.

When the mob crossed London Bridge on the morning of Friday, the 13th of June, they bethought themselves of Ball's sermon of yesterday; their better spirit had died out and the reign of lawlessness and cruelty began. Joined by the mob from Southwark and London the work of destruction was inaugurated. They burnt to the

ground the stately mansion of the Duke of Lancaster situated in the Savoy, the like to which was not to be found in the whole of England; they tore down and destroyed all his rich furniture; they threw his gold and silver plate and his jewels into the Thames; for it had been announced by proclamation among them that if any one of their number retained aught to his own use which had belonged to their hated enemy, that man should die the death. In proof that they were in earnest it is recorded that when one of them was detected in having thrust a piece of plate into his bosom, his companions presently flung both him and his booty into the fire, saying they were not thieves who had come to enrich themselves with plunder. "But as to good liquor (says Tyrrell),[19] they were not so scrupulous, for two-and-thirty of them being got into the Duke's wine cellar, they tippled so long 'till the rafters of the house being on fire fell down and stopped up the passage that they could not get out, but were heard to cry seven days after, and so perished unpitied." From the Savoy to the Temple was an easy distance, and thither the riotous mob now hastened. Then, as now, the Temple was one of the principal residences of the legal profession, against which the Wyclifites had pronounced the sentence of death and destruction, a sentence which they lost no time in carrying into execution. Here they ruined the buildings, with the exception of the church, and destroyed all the legal papers which they could discover. Next they set fire to the Hospital of St. John at Clerkenwell, of which the obnoxious Lord Treasurer was the Master. So vast was its extent that the ruins were still burning at the end of seven days.

Encouraged by reinforcements from Barnet, St. Alban's, and the surrounding districts, the insurgents now felt

[19] *Hist. of England*, iii. 858.

themselves sufficiently powerful to deal with London as with a conquered city. But the mob had become unmanageable from its bulk, which was still on the increase, and the latter volunteers as they arrived, failing to push their way to the front of the crowd, thought themselves defrauded of their fair share in the pillage and amusement. Accordingly the entire body split up into three sub-divisions, of which one continued its march towards the Tower. It was known that the King had fled thither as to a place of refuge, and that he had been followed by many members of the royal household. It was taken for granted that the Archbishop of Canterbury would be with him, the Treasurer also, and probably those other obnoxious councillors upon whom the mob was anxious to avenge itself for the advice which they had given to their young Sovereign. To save time and trouble to all concerned, they sent a message to the King, asking him to hand over to them these evil advisers, with whom they meant to deal according to their deserts; and they warned him that if he failed to do so, it would be so much the worse for himself.

Matters had now reached a crisis. London was in the hands of an armed insurrection and the life of the Sovereign was in danger. So far, however, he was safe. He was safe behind the strong walls of the Tower, he was amply provided with munitions of war and victuals, and he had but to close the gates and raise the drawbridges and await in patience the dispersion of this insolent rabble. If he were pleased to punish them upon the spot he had it in his power to do so. Six hundred archers and as many men at arms formed the garrison which he had under his command, a body of troops more than sufficient to have made the mob fly before them like the dust before the wind in October. But the King was a terror-stricken youth, and the twelve hundred soldiers were twelve hundred cowards. Not a bow was bent, not a sword was

drawn, but the gates were thrown open, and a message sent to the besiegers inviting them to enter and make the search for themselves. The mob was not long in realising the value of the bloodless victory which they had gained thus unexpectedly; they rushed across the moat and took possession of the fortress, and the Sovereign and the Metropolitan of England were in the hands of the drunken and brutal insurgents.

At first the mob seems to have been surprised and somewhat awestricken at the novelty of the position in which they found themselves. They wandered up and down the vast buildings which lay within the circuit of the walls of the Tower, gazing at first on all they saw with the besotted wonderment of their kind; and next gratifying their awakened curiosity and ingrained insolence. Pushing each other along from room to room they at last reached, but did not respect, the privacy of the royal apartments, and made themselves familiar with the bedroom of both the King and Queen. They treated the nobles, even the highest among them, with the most terrific familiarity, whose beards they stroked with their filthy hands, and whom they greeted in terms of jocular endearment. One sat himself down on a costly chair of state, another took his ease on the King's bed, and a third, more aspiring still, requested the favour of a salute from the royal lips of the Queen Mother. They went in and out, up stairs and down stairs, just as they pleased; and no one dared to utter a word of protest or to raise a hand against this new dynasty of Kentish sovereigns.

But they had not forgotten the Archbishop. So far he had remained undiscovered, but now his hour was at hand. He saw what was before him, and he conducted himself with the dignity and courage worthy of a successor of the great St. Thomas of Canterbury. Having

said his Mass, he was at this time making his thanksgiving in the chapel within the Tower. As the yells of the mob grew nearer and nearer, he nerved himself for the final effort, for which he was not unprovided. Conscious that he had fallen under the ban of the mob, he had busied himself during the last few days in preparing to make a good death. He had spent a large portion of the previous night in confession and prayer; "consequently" (says Walsingham) "he awaited the arrival of the insurgents in great security." He was seized by the men who had been sent in search of him, and by them he was dragged from the chapel to Tower Hill, where the larger body of the rioters was awaiting his arrival. The shout with which he was greeted when he appeared was "totally unlike the sounds which are uttered by a human being, and can be compared only to the yells of the inhabitants of the infernal regions." These hideous cries seem to have made a deep impression on the monk of St. Alban's, or his informer, who refers to them more than once, and always with a shudder. He compares them to what might be supposed to proceed from the throat of one of Satan's favourite peacocks.[20]

The Archbishop, who appears to have shown no lack of self-possession, attempted to expostulate with his captors. He reminded them that murder was a heinous sin; that he was a priest and an archbishop, and that his death at their hands would compel the Pope to lay England under an interdict. His warnings amused the men of Kent, and after having heard his sentiments they expressed their own. He was a sinner, said these followers of Wyclif, and, therefore, could be no true priest; and what cared they for Pope or interdict? He prepared for the death which he now saw to be inevitable, but before he knelt down to bare his neck to the axe, he forgave the wretch who

[20] Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.* i. p. 460.

wielded it. The blow fell, but it was clumsily delivered, and it had to be repeated again and again, for it was not until the eighth stroke that the head of Simon Sudbury rolled to the ground. It was exposed to many indignities, and the mutilated corpse lay where it fell, no one having the courage to remove it. In the course of the night one of the insurgents crept back to the blood-stained spot, and stole the episcopal ring from the finger of the murdered prelate.

So far from being appeased by this costly sacrifice, the frenzy of the populace was excited by it to the commission of yet greater atrocities. Sir Robert Hales, the second name on the condemned list, was next put to death; he had been a doomed man from the beginning of the outbreak, having been one of those who had dissuaded the King from yielding to the demands of the insurgents. Several others shared the same fate for the same cause; but as the day advanced many persons were put to death for no cause whatever. Murder became an amusement, and the people, in simple gaiety of heart, flocked to see a man beheaded as if it were an innocent and pleasant pastime. The mob acted with its usual caprice; it pounced upon a man here and a man there without assigning any definite reason why he was taken, and then he was hurried off to execution. No respect was paid to sacred buildings; churches and other holy places were defiled with innocent blood. The terrified inhabitants who had fled thither, as into a sanctuary, found that the presence of the altar itself afforded them no protection. Wyclif had decreed that no respect was due to it. An eyewitness assured Walsingham that he had seen thirteen Flemings dragged out of the church of the Augustinians and executed in the public street, and seventeen from another church.[21] Similar atrocities were committed throughout London and its neighbourhood.

[21] Id. p. 462.

Terrified into submission by the slaughter of the Archbishop and the Treasurer, the King and the royal party attempted to parley with their conquerors. They sent a message to the leaders of the mob, by which they pledged themselves to grant all that had already been demanded, upon condition that a stop should be put to this wanton destruction of property and human life, and that the insurgents should at once return to their homes. The offer was accepted by the men of Essex. They had worn themselves out with their exertions. Murder had ceased to be a novelty, and to witness the burning of a street or two no longer afforded its former amount of pleasurable excitement. Leaving behind them a few of their number to watch over their interests, the larger portion of the troop marched out of London towards Essex; and the undisputed possession of the city now remained in the hands of the men of Kent.

The Kentish men were more difficult to deal with than the men of Essex had been. Naturally they were quicker witted, and they were under a certain amount of discipline, the advantage of which soon showed itself. Their leader was a man whom they called Wat the Tyler, from his trade, "a sharp fellow," says Walsingham,[22] and his conduct showed that he deserved the epithet. When he had received the King's message he sent back for reply the assurance that he, too, was anxious for peace; but that before he would agree to accept it, he would like to know something more about the nature of the conditions upon which it was offered. Thus it became necessary that the terms should be discussed in detail and the consequence was that some delay was occasioned. This was exactly what was intended. Finding that, in consequence of the departure of his supporters from Essex, his own followers were outnumbered by the party of order, Wat had

[22] Id. p. 463.

resolved to circumvent his antagonists by treachery. He attempted to prolong the negociations until the following morning; proposing during the night to plunder the city and to set it on fire at four distinct points. During the confusion he would slaughter the King and his council, together with all those who refused to side with the insurrection.

An accident alone prevented this plan from being executed. Acting upon this system of delay Wat rejected one after the other, as insufficient, the offers made by the King. Constant in his hatred of the law he demanded that it should cease to exist, and that a new code should be introduced, more in accordance with the wishes and welfare of the people. But as this new law could not be introduced until the old had been swept away, and all connected with it, the men of Kent demanded the removal by beheading, of all the judges, lawyers, magistrates, and other legal functionaries; in short, of every individual who was in any way connected with those hateful agents under whose jurisdiction the people had been so long held in bondage.

The remainder of the story is well known, and as it has found its place in the general history of England, there is no need to reproduce it here. We all have heard of the insolence of the Kentish Tyler, of the loyalty of the citizens of London, of the decision and firmness of William of Walworth, and of the courage and presence of mind of the young sovereign. On the death of the leader, the insurrection came to a sudden end, and the panic-stricken insurgents hurried through Southwark on their way homewards. And here we may bid adieu to London and its inhabitants, in order to follow the narrative of our principal authority, Thomas of Walsingham, who tells us what happened at St. Alban's, of which monastery he himself was an inmate. But this must be done with all possible brevity.

When the mob from Kent and Essex had taken possession of London, and its success was no longer a question, the report of its brave doings soon reached St. Alban's, and naturally excited no little commotion among the retainers and tenants of that wealthy community. Many of them were well affected towards their old masters; perhaps the most of them were, but certainly not all. There was a party among them who thought that the time had arrived for a more equitable distribution of the good things of this life; and anxious to profit by the advent of the golden age they hurried off to London to take counsel with the great reformer, Wat Tyler. On their arrival they held a preliminary meeting in the Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, where they discussed their demands and reduced them to something like an official form. These demands were less exorbitant than might have been expected. The men of St. Alban's said they wanted to have a wider area of common for the depasturing of their cattle; they wanted to have the unrestrained right of fishing, hunting, and hawking over a wider range of country; they wanted to be allowed the privilege of grinding their corn without paying the ordinary multure for the handmill; they wanted besides freedom from various other feudal services, to which they seemed to have attached an exaggerated importance. Upon these points they were now anxious to consult the Kentish general; and then, having obtained his approval, they would lay their demands with the greater confidence before the abbot of St. Alban's. They thought he would follow their advice, and they hoped that for his own sake he would do so, for if he were recalcitrant they would consider it their duty to slaughter both him and the monks; and as for the monastery they would not leave one stone standing upon another. To support their claims and ensure success they determined to ask for

the loan of a few hundred of Wat's followers, so that the work of destruction, if it became necessary, might be done out of hand in a business-like manner.

When these petitioners laid their case before Wat, their advocate was a certain William Grindcobbe. He was well known at St. Alban's, having been fed and educated within the monastery, to some of the monks of which he was related. Grindcobbe's application was supported by several others of the party, each of whom tendered his own separate bill of complaint against the monks. Wat was moved with compassion at the tale of their wrongs and promised to avenge them. He vowed that, if necessary, he would most assuredly come and shave the beards of the abbot and his brethren; yea, if twenty thousand men were needed for the operation they should be ready whenever Grindcobbe called for them. In return, the grateful deputation promised faithfully to carry out Wat's orders, whatever they might be; and mutually satisfied with each other, the two parties separated on this understanding. The St. Alban's men returned home leisurely and in good spirits; but their arrival had been anticipated by a few mounted servants from the monastery, whom the Abbot had sent to London to watch the proceedings of his rebellious subjects.

The monks were now in an agony of terror. The Father Prior, four of the professed monks and several inmates of the house left it at once, and made off with all speed, and on foot, to their cell at Tynemouth, at the extreme north of England. The others stood their ground, and if they did not act with courage certainly acted with prudence. They listened, questioned and took time to consider; they even promised that they were ready to make important concessions. While the exact nature of these demands was under consideration news

came that the Tyler was killed, that his followers were dispersed, and that the insurrection had come to an end. When the law was restored the convent, as always was its wont, was generous and forbearing. It did not avenge itself with severity upon its penitent retainers; but it could not be expected to forget the lesson which it had been asked to learn from the disciples of John Wyclif. Nor did they on their side forget what their master had taught them. For the present they had failed, but they said they would wait, and they hoped that when they tried again they would be more successful.

The insurrection now spread from Essex into Suffolk, where it was headed by a priest of the name of John Wrawe, (or Strawe) who had learned his lesson from Wat the Tyler. He is said to have had a following of fifty thousand men, a number which exceeds the limits of probability. It was large enough, however, to do an immensity of mischief. The rioters, as usual, vented their fury, in the first place, upon the lawyers, of whom they beheaded Sir John Cavendish, the Lord Chief Justice of England. The Prior of Bury St. Edmund's was another of their victims, whose offence lay in having resisted some unjust claims advanced by the servants of the monastery. His headless trunk, after having been stripped to the shirt, was permitted to remain unburied for five days; no one daring to render it that last act of humanity. Various acts of brutality and violence were perpetrated, the details of which need not be enumerated.

Similar atrocities were committed by the insurgents in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. In this latter country the triumphant mob encountered an unexpected reverse. Henry Spencer, the bishop of the diocese, supported by the gentry of the neighbourhood, marched at their head to North Walsham, where the rebels were encamped, and then attacked them with such violence that they broke

their lines and fled. Several of the leaders were captured and executed.[28]

When tranquillity was somewhat restored, the law found itself strong enough to punish the ringleaders of the insurrection, from the confessions of some of whom an insight may be gained into their ultimate designs. Soon after Wat Tyler's death Jack Straw, the second in command among the rioters, was seized, tried, and condemned for treason. The Mayor of London, in order to draw him to make a confession, promised that if he would discover the particulars of the plot, many Masses should be said for his soul, and several of the citizens undertook to be equally charitable. In presence of the death which was so near at hand, the old faith returned to the repentant Wyclifite, and he made the following statement:

"It is no good," said he, "to tell any more lies, to do so would only add to my condemnation, so I will speak out and tell the whole truth. And what I have to say is this. When we sent for the King to come to us at Blackheath, our intention was to have killed all the guards and nobles who came with him. Having thus made ourselves masters of his person, we would have led him about with us from place to place throughout the entire realm, and forced him to sanction all that we had done in our conspiracy. Having thus secured the confidence of the whole peasantry, our next step would have been to destroy the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, the monks, canons, and rectors of parishes, sparing only the Begging Friars, who would have been enough for the celebration of Divine Service. The King's turn would have come

[28] The History of Walsingham contains a detailed account of these risings, to which a passing notice only could here be made. See ii. 1—8. The troubles at Cambridge are narrated at great length in the Rolls of Parliament, iii. 106, to which the reader is referred for additional information.

next. Having thus cleared the way, we should have made a new code of laws and set up a King in every county, Wat Tyler in Kent. We killed the Archbishop of Canterbury because he thwarted our design. On the evening of the day on which Wat was slain we intended to have set London on fire at its four corners, and plundered it at our convenience. This was our plan, as God help me at the hour of my death."

When the insurrection was quelled, Ball (who had been recaptured in the meantime) was brought up for trial at St. Alban's before Robert Tressilian, Chief Justice of England. The evidence against him was so conclusive that he was speedily condemned to be drawn, hanged, and quartered. At the approach of death the boastful spirit of the insurgent abandoned him, and he had the grace to ask for an interview with the Bishop of London. He made a public confession, which seems to have been reduced to writing and attested by a notary. It was to the effect that for two years he had been Wyclif's disciple, from whom he had learnt the heresies which he had promulgated. He stated that there existed a certain organized band of Wyclifites, who had agreed to perambulate the whole of England with the design of preaching everywhere their master's doctrines at one and the same time, so that every corner of the realm might speedily and surely be brought under the influence of these emissaries. His belief was that, unless active measures were adopted to prevent it, the mischief would be done within the space of two years. The entire plan was under the management of Wyclif, who was aided by Nicolas Hereford, John Aston, and Laurence Bedenam, all of whom were Masters of Arts.[24]

Ball was drawn, hanged, and beheaded at St. Alban's on July 15, 1381, in the presence of the young King

[24] Fasc. Ziz. p. 274; Wals. ii. 32, seq.

Richard the Second, and his quarters were sent to four of the chief towns of the kingdom.

The extent and general character of the rising receives some additional illustration from a list of those persons who were excepted from the general pardon which was afterwards granted by the King, and whose names were laid before the Parliament which met in the month of November following the outbreak. They were residents in the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, Essex, Hertford, Middlesex, Hampshire, Kent, Sussex and Somerset, besides the cities of London, Winchester and Canterbury. We thus learn the extent of the rising. The rebels are frequently described by their trade or occupation, such as potter, cordwainer, cook, carter, skinner, labourer, gardener, tailor, brewer, shepherd, boatman, carpenter, winedrawer and hosier. In Norfolk, seventeen persons were excepted from the general pardon, and in Suffolk as many as twenty, among whom were three parish priests. Cambridge gave three insurgents only, and Essex eleven, one of whom was a "buckler player." Middlesex, exclusive of the City of London, furnished only twenty, and Kent as many; while eight were recorded under Sussex, and thirteen in Somerset, one of whom was returned as following the doubtful occupation of a "sothsiggere" (soothsayer). By far the largest number was furnished by London, amounting to no less than a hundred and fifty, among whom we have a dyer named "Great Richard," and a sawyer called "Laurence with the great leg." Taverners, tailors, and tinkers are most frequent in the City of London, while the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex share among them the evil notoriety of supplying the largest number of clergy who took part in this lamentable outbreak.

From what has been already stated it is impossible to avoid arriving at the conclusion that the insurrection of

the Commons in the reign of Richard the Second was in its origin and in its objects the natural result of the teaching of John Wyclif. It was distinctly ascribed to him by some of those who were punished for the share which they had taken in it. It was based upon the principles which he taught, it was planned and executed by his followers, and it aimed at the furtherance and advancement of the ends which he desired to accomplish. If he contrived to stand aloof from any participation in its dangers, we may admire his discretion, but we cannot praise his courage or his honesty, still less can we exonerate him from the responsibility which he had incurred. In the face of such evidence as this it is not easy to defend him from the charge of having been in his day a preacher of sedition. I do not accuse him of any personal or actual participation in the terrible scenes which were at this time enacted in London and the neighbourhood. While they were being perpetrated our hero was placidly enjoying the safety afforded him by his comfortable rectory in Leicestershire, there penning the tractates which furnished men, bolder than himself, with arguments for insurrection, pillage, and murder, which they were not slow in reducing to practice. My contention is that the theorist who excogitates principles which necessarily lead to crime, and then circulates them among the public, is morally and legally answerable for that crime when it is committed. And this is Wyclif's position in regard to the insurrection of 1382.

CHAPTER IV.

Wyclifism at Oxford—Dr. Nicolas Hereford's sermon there—Canon Philip Repingdon's sermon there—Vernacular translations of the Holy Scriptures—Anglo-Saxon and Early English versions before Wyclif.

It might be urged as an objection, with some appearance of reason, that the harrowing events which I have attempted to describe in the last chapter have no necessary connexion with John Wyclif or his teaching. In the outbreak of 1382, the admirers of the Rector of Lutterworth see only a turbulent mob, which, acting according to its instincts, found its enjoyment in plunder, violence and bloodshed, and which knew little and cared less for the civil and religious speculations of him or of any one.

This explanation seems to me to be inadequate to meet the peculiarities of the outbreak. Not only had the insurgents caught the spirit of the Evangelical Doctor, but they had mastered his diction and spoke his language. The party had its own forms of expression which distinguished it wherever it made its presence known, whether the attack were directed against the doctrines of the Church or the organization of the State. Wyclif was quite as conspicuous a character in the House of Commons at Westminster as he was in the House of Convocation at Oxford; and his influence made itself felt for evil no less in the one than in the other. The scholastic Doctor of Divinity at Oxford and the drunken ruffian at London were both the disciples of one and the same master. To

both he taught the same lesson under varying forms of speech; to both he was the demagogue, the advocate of extreme measures, the leveller and the revolutionist. The novelties which he and his followers laboured with such restless activity to introduce into England had a double aim and application; they were meant to affect not only the Church but the State also. His teaching implied a new creed, a new code of laws, a new system of morality. He attacked the political traditions which had prevailed since the earliest days of the English monarchy; he attacked the doctrinal principles of the belief which had been established among us by its Divine Founder. Old things were to be regarded as the weak and beggarly elements of an effete superstition, and were doomed to fade away at the rising of this "Morning Star of the Reformation."

The revolutionary party, which aimed at such sweeping measures, was encouraged to persevere in its efforts by two considerations, which promised it success. The Church and the State had suffered, and were suffering from the steady development of various hostile principles, of which the chief were the growth of Cesarism and the decline of respect for the Papacy. The dispute between Philip the Fair, King of France, and Pope Boniface the Eighth had contributed to the promulgation of sundry theories which were fatal to Royal as well as Pontifical authority, and these principles were not allowed long to remain dormant. Their chief advocate was the English Franciscan, William of Occam,[1] whose doctrines were echoed by Wyclif and his followers. He maintained that the Sovereign had the power, not only to tax the property of the clergy upon his own independent authority, but further to resume any grants which had been made by his ancestors

[1] Along with Marsilius and Joannes de Janduno, Occam wished to make the ecclesiastical power subordinate to the royal in all matters.

to the Church, should it happen that the wants of the State so required it. He maintained, in short, that the authority of the Sovereign is supreme over the Church within his own dominions; but at the same time he held that this authority was derived from the people, who could withdraw it from their ruler if they thought necessary. The same principles were applied to the Church with the same results. Occam and his school held that the Pope might become a heretic; and that the Church of Rome, the entire body of the clergy, and even General Councils, might fall from the truth and teach error and falsehood. Here we recognize the source whence Wyclif drew many of his principles.

While such theories as these were tolerated in the English Court, the fact of their existence and acceptance in London could be no secret in Oxford; and that Wyclif was their advocate must have been notorious in the University from a comparatively early period of his residence. If any doubt existed upon this point, it was dispelled by his appearance in public as their exponent. Rash and arrogant as was his onslaught upon the Church, and doomed by anticipation to an ignominious overthrow, the revolutionary party—strong in the support of the State—was bold enough to hazard the experiment of a trial of strength. Wyclif began the attack with considerable skill. He advanced doctrines which, though apparently speculative rather than positive, were of such a questionable character, that they roused first the suspicion and then the hostility of several members of the University. Of these supporters of the faith, one of the earliest and most influential was Doctor John Cunningham.

Cunningham stood high in public estimation at Oxford, and deservedly so. He was a man of spotless character and acknowledged scholarship, Provincial of the Order of the Carmelites, and confessor to John of Gaunt. He

seems to have been Wyclif's senior, but upon this point we have no certain information. He began the discussion by attacking some of the theories which had recently been advanced by Wyclif in a *Determination upon Ideas*. My readers will thank me if I refrain from giving them any extracts from these disquisitions, for they discuss questions far too abstruse for the generality of us degenerate moderns. The controversy is important chiefly from the fact that shortly afterwards (A.D. 1381), it was followed up by an open and direct attack upon the doctrine of the Eucharist, in which Wyclif maintained, among other heresies, that the Consecrated Host upon the altar is not Christ Himself, but only an effectual sign of Him; that the doctrine of Transubstantiation has no ground in Scripture, and that the bread and wine remain substantially unchanged after consecration. When pressed in argument to explain his meaning more distinctly, Wyclif attempted to do so by maintaining that Christ is in the Eucharist only virtually, just as a king is in the whole of his realm. He suggested various other analogies which he said were illustrative of his meaning, some of which are so remote as to be unworthy of notice, while others are too indecent and blasphemous to be quoted. He added that the chief object of his teaching was to call the Church back from that idolatry upon the doctrine of the Eucharist, which she had taught and practised for many centuries.

An attack so defiant and so public upon these leading doctrines of the faith could not be permitted to pass by unnoticed. Accordingly the Chancellor of the University, supported by twelve Doctors of Theology and Canon Law, condemned the two propositions in which Wyclif's tenets respecting the Eucharist had been embodied by him; and these propositions were declared to be "erroneous, opposed to the decrees of the Church, and contrary to Catholic verity." This condemnation was made known

to Wyclif as he was publicly lecturing in the schools belonging to the Canons of St. Augustine. After having protested against the validity of the sentence, he appealed, not to the Pope, or the Bishop, or his ordinary, as would have been the usual and the proper course, but to the King; thereby showing his belief in the supremacy of the civil power over the ecclesiastical. Wiser heads than his own saw the danger of provoking a premature collision—the time would come presently—and they seem to have recommended a compromise. The Duke of Lancaster came down to Oxford in person, and enjoined Wyclif to be silent on the subject, in discussing which he had already given so much offence.[2] But the uncurbed spirit of the heresiarch muttered its *Non serviam*, and tried to evade the difficulties into which he had plunged himself, not by frankly and humbly admitting that he had been in error, but by drawing up a confession in which he repeated his former heresies respecting the Blessed Eucharist, and added new ones. He now affirmed that all the Doctors of the Church had erred, with the sole exception of Berengarius,[3] that Satan was now unbound,[4] and had exercised his power over the "Master of the Sentences,"[5] and all who preached the Catholic faith. He concluded his speculations by denouncing a woe upon the adulterous generation of his own day, who trusted the

[2] How far we have all the facts before us seems questionable. Possibly Wyclif's connection with the Court enabled him to know that he would be exposed to no real danger in disregarding the Duke's advice or command. We see that no evil result followed upon his disobedience.

[3] A heretic whose doctrine on the Eucharist was condemned by Pope Nicolas the Second and by the Councils of Tours, Vercelli, and the Lateran.

[4] Apoc. xx. 2, 3.

[5] Peter Lombard, styled the *Master of the Sentences*, was the author of the text-book for theology which was generally used in the schools until the appearance of the *Summa Theologiæ* of St. Thomas of Aquin. To condemn him was to condemn the accredited teaching of the Church.

testimony of Innocent [the Third] or Raymond [de Penna Forti] rather than that of the Gospel; and a double woe upon the apostate lips which place the latter Church before the earlier, and who say that the Sacrament is not true bread and true wine.

As was natural, this confession of Dr. Wyclif provoked considerable discussion, and many answers to it were written. The best known of these is a contemporaneous treatise, the work of an Augustinian named Thomas Winterton;[6] and others were composed by monks of Durham and St. Alban's.[7] The Church did not fail in her duty; but the results which speedily followed made it obvious to friend and foe alike that if she meant to hold her own she would have to fight for it. Wherever this firebrand made his appearance discord and division followed. "The hearers (says Walden)[8] challenged each other to battle, and schisms broke out in every town." As his office required, the Archbishop of Canterbury interposed his authority in support of the public peace. The letter which he wrote to Dr. Peter Stokys, a Carmelite, is extant,[9] and furnishes us with a trustworthy account of the condition of affairs within the University of Oxford as they existed towards the middle of the year 1382. Having heard that many unlicensed preachers were spreading heresies throughout his province, "hurtful to the state of the entire Church and the quiet of the realm, thereby causing men to leave the Catholic faith, out of which there is no salvation," the Archbishop

[6] Wald. *Fasc. Ziz.*, p. 181. See Tanner, p. 781.

[7] *Id.* p. 241. This was one named, according to Bale, Simon Sudbraye, possibly the future archbishop of Canterbury. But no such writing as that ascribed to him by Bale is quoted by Bishop Tanner.

[8] *Id.* p. 272. In like manner Adam de Usk under the year 1382, writes thus, "The people of England, wrangling about the old faith and the new, every day are, as it were, on the point of bringing on themselves discord and ruin." p. 103.

[9] *Fasc. Ziz.* p. 275, dated 28th May, 1382.

charged Stokys to prohibit the teaching of certain erroneous propositions within the University, which he then proceeded to specify in detail. They were ten in number. Three related to the Eucharist, and repeated the heresies and errors already specified. Of the others, one affirmed that when a bishop or priest is in mortal sin, he can neither ordain, nor consecrate, nor baptize. The others taught that if a penitent were truly contrite, confession is useless; that Christ did not appoint the Mass: that God should obey the devil; that if a Pope were a bad man, he has no power over faithful Christians, except (possibly) such power as he may have received from the state; that there would be no Pope after Urban the Sixth, but that every Church should be governed by its own laws; with others too numerous to be specified.

At one of the Congregations which met in London to consider the above heretical opinions occured an incident which led to serious results. Three graduates of Oxford having refused to join in the condemnation of these articles, were cited by the Archbishop to give an account of their opinions. Of these one named Aston, was condemned; the other two, Hereford and Repingdon, refusing to appear in court, were declared to be contumacious, and were accordingly excommunicated.[10]

The controversy was not yet ended. In the same year the Orders of the Friars Preachers and Minors, the Augustinians and the Carmelites, all of whom had houses in Oxford, addressed a joint letter to John, King of Castille and Leon, and Duke of Lancaster, in which they detailed the grievances to which they were exposed by the calumnies of Wyclif and his followers. Of these Wyclifites, one of the most active and mischievous was Doctor Nicolas Hereford; and they requested that this

[10] *Id.* p. 289, 290.

individual might be summoned to London, there to give an account of his conduct.[11]

No reply having been vouchsafed to this letter, the revolutionary party was encouraged to persevere in the course upon which it had now entered. Hereford had his revenge. Walden refers to a sermon preached by this personage upon the feast of the Ascension, "in which he excited the people to insurrection, and excused and defended Wyclif;" but respecting which he gives us no further information.[12] Fortunately, however, a full and authenticated abstract of this remarkable discourse has been preserved in one of the Bodleian manuscripts,[13] for a reference to which I am indebted to the kindness of Professor Arnold, the learned editor of the Oxford edition of Wyclif's English writings. As this sermon has never been printed, I gladly embrace this opportunity of laying before the reader an outline of its contents, which are valuable as offering a genuine specimen of the length to which the more advanced followers of Wyclifism were prepared to carry their theories. We should not forget that as Hereford addressed the people in their mother-tongue, much of the telling quaintness and power of the original must have been lost in its translation into the Latin form in which alone it has come down to us.

Hereford's sermon was delivered on May 15, 1382 (being Ascension Day), at the Cross in the Churchyard of St. Frideswide's Church in Oxford. As might have been expected there was a large congregation. The Chancellor and other dignitaries of the University of course were there in their official capacity; and the mob of the town and outskirts was not absent. Some came led thither by their sympathy with the known sentiments of the speaker; some came to express their opposition to his

[11] *Id.* p. 292, dated 18 Feb. 1382.

[12] *Id.* p. 296.

[13] MS. Bodl. 840, p. 848.

teaching; while many others were drawn by curiosity, and the hope that they might be so fortunate as to witness a collision between the rival parties.

Dr. Hereford stood up and began to speak. After a few introductory remarks upon the great event of the day, the preacher expressed himself somewhat to the following effect:

"Although [said he] the attack made by St. Richard[14] upon the begging friars—in which I follow him to-day—may seem to have produced little or no effect during his life, yet I am persuaded that at the present moment he is making earnest intercession with God for me, and for all who are fellow-workers along with me in the object which binds us together. He and the whole court of Heaven along with him, cry out against our opponents.[15] We ought to love the whole community more than we love any single individual within it. All that I am doing springs from my zeal for the commons, for whom I am prepared to suffer all things."

Then followed an attack upon the prevailing vices of the day; and first of all upon the gluttony and unclean lives of the laity. But these were speedily dismissed, and the speaker found a more congenial subject on which to dilate when he proceeded to enlarge upon the evil lives of the secular clergy, as well prelates as curates, whom he taxed with trafficking in benefices and other spiritual commodities.

Then came the turn of the regulars. Of the canons and monks and such as held property, many, said he, had

[14] By St. Richard is doubtless meant Richard Fitz-Ralph, Archbishop of Armagh, whose antipathy to the mendicant orders of friars has already been referred to.

[15] It is significant that in the Bidding Prayer, which followed in the sermon, the preacher made no special mention of the Pope, as was customary.

acquired it unjustly. They have got hold of lands and farms by their perjury, by cheating, treachery, and fraud. They hold them by a false title, consequently they are thieves and robbers, and the followers of Judas who betrayed Christ. They violate the intentions of the men who founded the community to which they belong. They delight to be called lords, and to ride about on gaily-caparisoned horses. They engage in worldly pursuits, and are keen and far-sighted in the ways of the world. "I assert [said he] without fear of contradiction, that there is not a single large abbey in the whole of England which is clean-handed in this matter. Such men are thieves and robbers; for everything which they possess, over and above that which is absolutely necessary for their food and clothing, is the property of the poor."

The language was plain, and plainly counselled pillage, riot, and insurrection; but the preacher was even yet more outspoken when he expressed his opinions about the mendicant orders, of which, be it remembered, there were several large communities at the time in Oxford. "These men [said Hereford] love temporal things more than spiritual; for when they go a begging they ask you to give them nothing better than the things of this present life. They never have enough, give them what you will. The poverty of the poor man is no security to him from their importunity. It is folly to give them any alms. But of all fools the greatest is the man who gives a yearly stipend to a friar to pray for him! By so doing you convert the one Mediator between God and yourself into an enemy; you turn a friend into a foe. Sometimes one of these same friars becomes a graduate, a Master of Arts for instance, or a Bachelor. So much the worse for you; for it makes him all the more pressing for alms. 'Look at me,' says one of these fellows, 'I am now a Bachelor, and my wants are greater than the wants of

other men. I must have wherewithal to support my position.' And the higher the degree the higher price you have to pay. They are not masters of theology, they are masters of vanity, wicked children, "lurdens and losels." They come to the University merely for the purpose of taking a secular degree, hoping thereby to pick up some worldly honour, things contrary to their vow and profession. Hereby they prove themselves to be plain apostates. Of all men in the realm these begging friars [said he] are the most burdensome to it; and therefore they are the greatest disturbers of its peace. I am safe in telling you that it never will be well with England as long as they are suffered to remain within it. The only way to humble them is to take their possessions from them. They will never be worth anything until you have stopped them from begging." And then, stretching out his arms, the preacher exclaimed: "I entreat you to do this, all of you who are here assembled, clerks and laymen; I entreat each and all of you, for the sake of Him Who died upon the Cross, to do your best to carry this measure into effect."

The remainder of Hereford's harangue was in a tone somewhat less excited; but the spirit was no less bitter, and the sentiments no less revolutionary. "The men of whom I am speaking (said this mischievous demagogue) build lofty houses and stately churches, which are things expressly forbidden by their Rule. If the king and the realm would strip them of these possessions and thus deprive them of their superfluous wealth, as they ought to do, there would be no need for his Majesty to plunder the poor commons of the realm by taxes, as now is the custom. But woe and alas! he has no officers who will carry out this act of justice. And since there are none whose special office and function it is to do this work, it devolves upon you, O faithful Chris-

tians! to put forth your hands and carry this work to its due conclusion. And then it is my assured hope that all will prosper with us; for right well do I know that this is the will of the Almighty God Himself, and that so it ought to be done."

Whether the sermon had come to its intended conclusion at this point, or whether it was here interrupted by the Chancellor and his assessors, does not appear. But the services of a notary public, who had been in attendance from the beginning, were here put into requisition, and an instrument was drawn up and duly executed, a copy of which forms the basis of the preceding narrative.

Irregular and turbulent as was this meeting, lawless and revolutionary as were the sentiments which were expressed in it, we are justified in accepting it as clearly and fairly exhibiting the doctrines and the spirit of Wyclif. But the Rector of Lutterworth would not have spoken so loudly and distinctly as did Dr. Nicolas Hereford. He would have concealed his meaning under dubious phrases, and would have been careful to reserve for himself some quiet back door by which to escape as soon as danger began to show itself. Safely housed in his comfortable benefice he left it to others, braver men than himself, to face the peril which he had not the courage to encounter. We are all the more grateful, therefore, to his honest but indiscreet disciple for his sermon at Oxford, for it enables us better to understand the doctrines of his master than the master himself would have had the honesty to express them.

This aggression upon the rights of the Church received a great accession of strength from the time when it became popularized by the agency of such men as the Oxford Wyclifites, of whom Hereford was one of the most conspicuous. But there were many others in the

University who were of the same way of thinking, and were no less bold in giving utterance to their opinions. The history of another of these missioners of Wyclifism is worthy of being here chronicled. Walden[16] mentions a canon of Leicester named Philip Repingdon, who, from the time that he had taken his doctor's degree, boldly preached heresy on the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Altar, having previously concealed his opinions under the cloak of a winning modesty and humility. Notwithstanding the suspicions by which he was surrounded, he was appointed by the Chancellor of the University (Robert Rugge) to preach at St. Frideswide's Cross on the festival of Corpus Christi; and a repetition of the utterances which had occasioned so much scandal on the previous Ascension Day being anticipated on the present occasion, the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered the Chancellor to cause the Acts of the synod which had condemned Wyclif, to be publicly read in the hearing of Repingdon, as a wholesome caution to him before he began his sermon. At the same time the Archbishop took the opportunity of rebuking the Chancellor for having intrusted a man, who had already gained such an evil name as Hereford had earned for himself, with the privilege of uttering his opinions upon one of the greatest festivals of the Church. The offended Chancellor stood upon the dignity of his position; "neither archbishop, nor bishop, had any authority over the University," said he, "even in the matter of heresy." Apparently he was favourably inclined towards Wyclif, certainly he played a double part. He promised that he would assist at the reading of the document enjoined by the Archbishop; but he hired about a hundred men in armour, who came with drawn swords ready to slaughter the unhappy Carmelite upon whom had devolved the hazardous duty

[16] *Fasc. Ziz.* p. 296.

of reading the decrees of the synod. Attended by his proctors and the mayor of the city, along with various others of kindred sentiments, the Chancellor was present at Repingdon's sermon. Unfortunately no copy of this discourse has reached us,[17] but it seems to have equalled that of Hereford's in its violence and audacity. He exhorted the people to rise and plunder the churches, he said that the temporal lords ought to be named in the Bidding Prayer before the Pope and the Bishops, he defended Wyclif through thick and thin, and spoke in railing terms of many classes of men and several individuals. He declared that the Duke of Lancaster took the matter much to heart, and that he would defend all the Lollards, whom he called holy priests. When the sermon was ended, the preacher, attended by twenty men, who wore armour under their clothes, entered for a space into St. Frideswide's Church. The Chancellor waited for him at the door, and when he and Repingdon met they walked away together, laughing. There could be no mistake as to their sentiments, which they did not take the trouble to conceal. The Lollards in the crowd were delighted at the victory which it was obvious that they had gained.

The Church hastened to vindicate her insulted authority. The Chancellor and his supporters were summoned by the Archbishop to appear before him at Lambeth, there to give an explanation of their riotous proceedings. The evidence against them being conclusive, they were found guilty upon several counts. It was proved that they had favoured Wyclif and his adherents, and they had no further defence; whereupon a new set of Articles, more stringent than the former,

[17] A report upon it was drawn up, however, at the time by a notary public, of which it was intended that a copy should be inserted by Walden in his *Fasciculus* (see p. 300). But it does not appear in that volume.

were handed to the Chancellor for publication. He found, however, the means of evading them. In reply he urged that he did not dare to read them in Oxford, where his life would be endangered were he to do so. The Archbishop, unable to exercise any further jurisdiction over the authorities of the University, had no other remedy than to transfer the case to the civil courts, by whose authority two monitory writs were addressed to Dr. Rugge and the proctors. Hereupon Repingdon and Hereford were suspended. They lost no time in laying their case before their patron the Duke of Lancaster, urging that the condemnation of the articles which had been pronounced to be heretical by the bishops would lead to the weakening of the temporal power. The Duke appeared at first inclined to take their part; but when he understood what were their real opinions on the Sacrament of the Altar, his sentiments towards them changed, "and he held them in abomination ever afterwards." He referred them back to the Archbishop, and dismissed them from his presence.[18]

Failing in their attempt upon the Duke, Hereford and Repingdon in their defence, and by the Archbishop's permission, laid before him a series of twenty-four conclusions, which upon examination were found to be no less objectionable than their former statements had been. They maintained their opinions with the same pertinacity for which their conduct had been so conspicuous. Here the history of these two Oxford doctors vanishes out of sight, as far as Walden's narrative is concerned; for at this point it is interrupted and passes on to other matters.

I have entered at some length into these details of what occurred at Oxford in 1382, as furnishing the best illustration which we possess of the progress which

[18] *Fasc. Ziz.* p. 318.

Wyclif's doctrines were making in England during his lifetime. If such proceedings as these could take place in that University, it is reasonable to suppose that the progress of these new opinions must have been yet more rapid in quarters where the authority of the Church was less dominant than in this, the supposed stronghold of orthodoxy. We have seen what the mob did on Tower Hill, and here we find the explanation of their conduct. And the instances which Walden has here recorded are followed by others which continue in almost unbroken succession from the time of Richard the Second to that of Henry the Eighth. A more careful inspection of the Episcopal Registers throughout the country would most probably reveal numerous instances of insubordination and heretical pravity, of the existence of which at the present moment we know very little. We know enough, however, to authorize the belief that the descent of Wyclifism can be traced from its author until it was revived, remodelled, and adapted to their immediate wants by such men as Hus and Zwingli in Switzerland, Luther in Germany, Calvin in France, Cranmer in England, and Knox in Scotland. Each of these heretics drew largely from the polluted fountain which was opened out by the arch-heretic of Lutterworth, and there is scarcely a point in which they dissent from the teaching of the Catholic Church which cannot be traced back to the pages of John Wyclif.

Returning however to the more immediate examination of our subject, let us consider Wyclif from another point of view, and one in which he has especial claims upon our attention. If there be one recommendation which, more than another, has endeared the name of Wyclif to the Protestant world and won for him the place which he holds in its admiration, it is because Protestants have been taught to recognise in him the earliest translator

into English of the whole of the Old and New Testaments. This is a grave error, but a very general one; and whenever it is put forward at a public meeting (as almost always is the case) it seldom fails to be received with shouts of applause. The subject moreover is interesting in itself and has a claim upon us connected with our national literature. Let us see whether the gift of the English Bible was such an unprecedented novelty, such an original discovery, as we are invited to believe it to have been.

Among the charges brought against the Holy Church by her enemies, one of the most frequent, and probably of the most effective from a Protestant point of view, is this, that (whenever possible) the use of the written Word of God before the era of the reformation was systematically discouraged, even to prohibition. Along with this assertion, which is wrong in fact, is joined an inference, which is wrong in logic. It is assumed that the circulation of the Scriptures among the laity was forbidden because were it to prevail it would necessarily lead to the discovery of the false doctrines which have been forced upon the people by their teachers. In reply it will suffice to show that the faithful were never deprived of the legitimate use of the Bible; but that, on the contrary, its study was not only sanctioned by the clergy, but earnestly recommended.

In the Western Church, where for long Latin was a spoken language, the Vulgate and the Missal were generally understood; the use of that language to such men therefore was no hardship. In the Eastern Empire the case was similar, the Septuagint version and the Greek liturgy of the Mass formed no difficulty; for Greek was in common use among the people. In the public service of the Church the lector was required to read aloud lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles

of St. Paul, and then the deacon or priest recited the Gospel, the congregation standing and silent.[18] When Greek and Latin ceased to be generally understood, each nationality provided itself with its own vernacular translation. St. John Chrysostom tells us that the inhabitants of Syria, Egypt, India, Persia, Ethiopia,[19] and countless other nations, had the Holy Scriptures each in its own tongue. If it be objected that these quotations apply only to the public reading of the Old and New Testaments in the church, and leave untouched the deeper question of the impossibility of the laity being able to study God's written Word at home, it may be answered that in one of his sermons St. John Chrysostom speaks thus. "I am always advising you, and I will never cease to advise you, not only to attend to what you hear in church, but also carefully to study the Sacred Writings when you are at home. And I have urged the same duty upon such persons as I have conferred with in private. No one can hope to attain eternal salvation who neglects the frequent reading of the Scriptures." [20]

But this happy condition of things gradually passed away as love and faith grew colder, and a new system of philosophy was introduced in its place. The written Word, which was meant to have been to all the savor of life unto life, became to many the savor of death unto death. Men began to speculate upon it, and it became the subject of dispute and doubt. Among the other false prophets who elevated reason above religion, the Waldenses and Albigenses made themselves eminently conspicuous. They claimed the right to examine the

[18] Const. Apost. ii. 57 (Cotel. i. 264, ed. 1724). See also Conc. Tolet i. capp. 2, 4 (Hard. i. 990).

[19] Hom. i. in Pent. (Opp. ii. 548. ed. Gaume.)

[20] De Lazaro, Conc. iii. (Opp. vi. 903.) See also the passages to the same effect in viii. 216, 361.

Scriptures for themselves, and to affix to each passage in them such a meaning as they pleased, each one for himself. The guidance of the Catholic clergy was disregarded. We meet with the system in an early stage of its existence as it is described by Pope Innocent the Third in a letter which he addressed to the Bishop of Metz.[21] That unhappy city and diocese, he says, were overrun by a multitude of lay-men and lay-women, who had caused the Gospels, the Epistles of St. Paul, the Psalter, the Morals of Job, and many other books, to be translated into French, which they used in their clandestine meetings. When they are rebuked for so doing by any of their parish priests, they resist them to their face, quoting texts of Scripture to show that they themselves ought not to be blamed. They go so far as to assert that they know more about the Scriptures than their teachers do. "Now," continues His Holiness, "although the wish to understand the Divine Scriptures so far from being blameworthy is laudable, yet these men deserve censure because they hold secret meetings and usurp the right of preaching, thereby bringing into contempt the office of the priesthood."

From these words of the Sovereign Pontiff we learn the mind of the Church upon the question here before us. Taught by him we can distinguish between Catholic truth and the falsehood which seeks to pervert it. Heretical versions of the Scriptures were condemned then, as now, not because they were the Word of God, but because they were not the Word of God. Not only were they not what they pretended to be, but they were falsified and unauthorised renderings of that Word, weapons prepared by an enemy for a hostile purpose. Many indirect evils followed the introduction of these unauthenticated translations, wherever they gained a footing. These

[21] Epp. Pontif. ii. n. 141. Migne, 214, col. 695.

novel versions were attended by many evil results. They led to secret meetings clandestinely held, they engendered and fostered spiritual pride, they tended to bring the clergy into contempt and the sacraments into neglect. Armed with one of these volumes the heretical pupil of to-day became the heretical teacher of to-morrow, the centre from which the ill-savour of heresy diffused itself over the neighbourhood, which until the introduction of such books had been peaceful, united and happy. Ere long every man and woman who adopted these novel versions became the infallible exponent of every passage of Holy Writ, from the prophecies of Esaias to the Visions of St. John the Divine. What more effectual system could be devised to prepare men's minds for a general rebellion against authority? In denouncing such a heresy as this, and the heretic in whom it originated and by whom it was propagated, the Church was fulfilling her high mission by seeking to preserve pure and unadulterated that Sacred Volume which its Divine Author has entrusted to her keeping.

But we have not yet fathomed the depth of Wyclif's intentions in regard to this design of his in translating the Bible. It was only a means to an end. The Bible is not an easy book, and it contains many passages which afford wide scope for speculation and discussion. Hitherto the Church had put her own interpretation upon these passages, and in affirming that interpretation of her's to be correct had denounced all others as erroneous. Hence came the unity, the precision and the confidence with which she has always spoken, hence her unerring authority. But to this authority Wyclif objected. This new law-giver proclaimed that every man can judge of the sense of the Bible for himself, and is under no obligation to submit to any authority save that of his own judgment. His theory was that every man is a

priest, and what is a priest without a Bible? The possession of our English Bible makes him the arbiter of its meaning, removes him from the usurped jurisdiction of priest and bishop, and places him on an equality with the Pope himself. St. Augustine has long ago settled the question for them. "Men became heretics," says this great Doctor, "by this one process; they misunderstand the Scriptures and defend their own opinions."[22] And in the same spirit St. Gregory the Great writes; "The Sacred Scriptures are, as it were, a letter sent by Almighty God to His creatures . . . I beseech you therefore daily to study and to meditate upon the words of your Creator."[23]

We see then how Wyclif organised his attack upon the Church. He devised a new Creed, a new code of morality and a new system of politics. He instituted a new body of clergy, with a new succession, and provided his followers with a new Bible, which every man and woman among them was at liberty to interpret according to his, or her, private opinion.

So much then for the subject in its wider aspect; let us now see how it stands the test of a closer examination. What says history?

The Catholic Church is said to be an enemy to the diffusion of the knowledge of Divine Truth, and especially hostile to the general circulation of the written Word of God in the language of the people. I repeat that this is a mistake, or rather it is a misstatement. Our objection is not to the Bible, but to falsified versions of the Bible, versions which intentionally or unintentionally, through ignorance or malice, pervert the truth and teach falsehood.

[22] *De Genes.* l. vii. cap. 9.

[23] L. iv. Ep. 40. *ad Theodorum Medicum.* If further information upon this subject be desired it will be found in Archbishop Ussher, *De Scripturis Vernaculis.* Lond. 1690.

Here there is nothing strange, in doing this the Catholic and the Protestant act alike. The Church of England objects to circulate the Douay version;—why should she wonder if we, on our side, object to permit to our people the use of "The Holy Bible translated by his Majesty's special command, and appointed to be read in churches" by the same supreme authority?

We assert, then, that from a very early period of our history the people of England were familiar with the leading facts and doctrines of the Sacred History. The story of the Saxon Caedmon, so admirably told by the Venerable Bede,[24] is known to every one. This Yorkshire cowherd composed a poem which embraced an outline of the Old and New Testaments. He sang of the creation of the world and of our first parents, and told the subsequent history of the children of Israel, as recorded in Holy Writ. Then followed his narrative of our Lord's Incarnation, His Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the teaching of the Apostles. He described the terrors of the Last Judgment, the horrors of Hell, and the joys of the heavenly Kingdom, in language so forcible that on hearing it men were weaned from their evil ways and led into the paths of holiness. Fragments of this remarkable poem are still extant, and have been more than once published.

At the time of his death the Venerable Bede was employed in translating into the Saxon language the Gospel of St. John. King Alfred's biographer, Asser, assures us that if the most necessary parts of Holy Writ were not made accessible to his subjects in their own tongue, it was only because the King had no opportunity of carrying into effect his wishes on this point. Long before his time the entire Book of Psalms and the four

[24] *Hist. Eccl.* iv. 24. Caedmon seems to have lived about the year 680.

Gospels had been translated into Saxon.[25] We are spared the necessity of further research into the history of the vernacular Scriptures among our Saxon forefathers by quoting the following passage from the Preface of the Rev. J. Forshall to the Wyclifite translation of the Bible[26]: "The writings which are still extant show that the Anglo-Saxon Church must have had in its own tongue a considerable amount of Scriptural instruction."

The same observation holds good as to the period after the Norman conquest. Before the end of the thirteenth century an important step had been taken by turning into verse, both French and English, the whole of the Psalter. The translation is a tolerably close rendering of the Latin, and has the additional merit of being simple and expressive. During the reign of the first three Edwards there appeared a great variety of poetical compositions upon sacred subjects containing large extracts from the Scriptures. Long before Wyclif's translation, writes Archbishop Ussher, there existed an English version of the entire Bible, an assertion in which he is supported by Dr. James, keeper of the Bodleian and Cottonian Libraries, and a devoted admirer of Wyclif.[27]

These facts, with many others which might be quoted,

[25] See the Anglo-Saxon and Early English Psalter, now first printed from MSS. in the British Museum. London, 1844. 8vo. 2 vols. Surtees Society.

[26] Four volumes, 4to, Oxford, 1850. A work to which I express my grateful obligations. The Preface is a model of patient research and judicious criticism.

[27] See Ussher's treatise, *De Scripturis et Sacris Vernaculis*, p. 155. London, 1690. Dr. James was the author of the well-known "*Apology for John Wickliffe*, showing his conformity with the new Church of England. To which are added two tracts of John Wickliffe." Oxon, 1608, 4to. It is just, however, to add that the accuracy of this statement of James and Archbishop Ussher has been questioned, among others, by the editors of Wyclif's Bible.

may suffice to show that translations of various portions of the Old and New Testaments had been familiar to Englishmen long before the days of John Wyclif, and that he cannot be considered the originator of this grand idea. Nor is his share very considerable, even in that portion of the work which his admirers of the present day are anxious to assign to him as his own exclusive property. If any portion of the undertaking belongs to him, it is the version of the New Testament, and even on this point his Oxford editors, Forshall and Madden, speak with considerable reserve. "This translation," write they, and their remark applies only to the New Testament, "might probably be the work of Wyclif himself." Possibly, then, he took no active part in the translation of the entire New Testament; certainly he had nothing to do with the version of the Old Testament. Probably while the New Testament was in progress, or within a short time of its completion, the Old Testament was taken in hand by one of his coadjutors. That this was the case is proved by a note written at the end of one of the Bodleian MSS.,[28] which ascribes the version to Nicolas de Hereford; and Wyclif's recent editors (though naturally anxious to preserve his reputation where possible) tell us that they "have no hesitation in giving full credence to its statement." It comprises all the Apocryphal Books, so called, excepting the fourth book of Esdras. Hereford's version was extremely literal, occasionally obscure, and sometimes incorrect, and a revision was considered necessary. Nor can even this humble portion of the work be ascribed to Wyclif, for it was not issued until some time after his death.

These details, interesting in themselves, have led us to two important conclusions. We see, in the first place, that the idea of a translation of the Bible into English

[28] See the Preface by Forshall and Madden, p. 16.

did not originate with Wyclif; and that in trying to carry it out he was merely continuing an idea long practically familiar to his countrymen. We see, in the second place, that little of the actual work of the undertaking can be ascribed to him with any certainty. Perhaps the version of the New Testament may be his, perhaps not; certainly no more. So, then, neither the design nor the execution are due to him. It was not a congenial occupation. The duties of a translator were too humble, and too clearly defined to suit the more aspiring genius of our Reformer. Such work afforded him no scope for the exercise of the spirit of railing and invective in which his soul delighted. Abandoning the weary drudgery of translation to others, he found more congenial occupation in writing a ponderous tome which he was pleased to call his *Summa*, in rivalry to that of St. Thomas of Aquin, and death surprised him while so occupied. He preferred his own wild speculations to the less exciting duties of the translator. The translation of the Holy Scriptures into English did not hold a primary place in the estimation of John Wyclif; and it is ascribed to him in defiance of all the evidence of history.

CHAPTER V.

Nature and extent of Wyclif's heresies—His unpublished writings—His doctrine of predestination—Our Blessed Lady and the Saints—The Church, the Pope and the Clergy—The Sacraments, Baptism, the Eucharist and Orders.

HAVING completed our outline of the life and character of John Wyclif as he appears on the pages of contemporaneous history, we have now reached that point of the inquiry at which it becomes necessary to examine the nature of the opinions which he held and promulgated, in as far as they differed from the doctrines of the Catholic Church. The attempt is sometimes made to minimise these divergencies, and to show that they are few and unimportant. Such however is not the case. But in what points soever he differed, whether few or many, small or great; he was in error, and these errors constituted the heresies for which he was justly condemned and excommunicated. There is no room for questioning the fact of his guilt and the justice of his punishment. I have not hesitated therefore to call him a heretic. All the requisites which are necessary to constitute a formal heretic meet in the person of the Rector of Lutterworth. He held heretical opinions, taught them, and maintained them to the last day of his unhappy life. The points on which he was in error were made known to him by competent authority, but he held his own opinions. They were not speculative errors, errors of such an abstruse character as to escape the notice or surpass the intelligence of the ordinary inquirer; they were plain and

practical, touching and poisoning nearly every article of Christian faith and practice. Not only were they very radical, but they were very numerous. In the year 1415, the Council of Constance condemned forty-five of them. According to Bishop Bale, one John Luck (a contemporary, who resided at Oxford) collected no less than two hundred and sixty-six heretical and erroneous propositions from Wyclif's writings.[1] Other statements exist which debit him with even a larger number. To examine this formidable catalogue in detail becomes impossible; it will suffice for our present purpose to place before our readers some few of the more remarkable of the innovations which Wyclif attempted to introduce amongst our ancestors.

In order to form a just estimate of any author we must be familiar with his writings. Their evidence is indisputable, and commands a respect which we cannot concede to any other authority, either friendly or hostile. Wyclif's opinions then are to be gathered from Wyclif's writings. They are very numerous, both in Latin and English, and of both classes a considerable number has already been printed. The unpublished Latin works are said to be very voluminous; and it is the object of the Wyclif Society to publish these volumes.

Our conviction however is that, should these works of the Rector of Lutterworth of evil memory ever be printed, they will not materially alter the opinion which we must continue to entertain of their author. Possibly they may reveal a few interesting personal facts connected with him; probably they will enable us to trace the gradual formation of his peculiar opinions and to mark the steps by which he forsook the good and embraced the evil. Yet the inquiry must be of a comparatively limited interest, and few will

[1] See Bale, cent. vii. 61; Wood, *Hist. Oxon.* p. 206; Tanner, p. 487; Foxe, iii. 321.

care to pursue it through the large range of dull reading which will have accumulated on the shelves of those subscribers who shall live to witness the end of this commercial undertaking. But if the number of the volumes were doubled they would have no practical bearing whatever upon the question of Wyclif's heresy, which has been long ago decided. And this, be it borne in mind, is the one question which at the present time claims our attention.

If there be any one feeling or sentiment which more than another has impressed itself upon the age in which we live, it is the doctrine of the absolute freedom of the individual. It has become an axiom very generally accepted which few men of the world would dare to dispute, that every individual has the right to judge for himself and to act for himself. He asks for no external guidance, and he will accept of none. He has become his own lawgiver, and for him there is no superior Court of Appeal. How such theories could seek to engraft themselves upon the doctrines which form the basis of Wyclif's teaching is to be explained only on the supposition that Wyclif's supporters do not know what Wyclif taught. They know that he called the Pope by the name of Antichrist; they believe that he translated the Bible into English; and this, probably, is about the extent of their information. But it is enough to satisfy them. They do not know the heresies which he held, and which he attempted to introduce into England. They do not know the blasphemies which he poured out against the Three Persons of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, and the scurrilous obscenities with which he assailed various articles of faith and practice; truths, which Protestants and Catholics alike hold in respect and veneration. He has drawn his portrait of himself in his own writings. If they knew Wyclif as he is therein represented, I am

persuaded that their opinions about him would undergo a great revolution. To help them in this inquiry the following abstract of some of the doctrines of Wyclifism are submitted to their consideration.

The relation in which the Creator and the Creature stand towards each other must of necessity form a primary article of enquiry. What were Wyclif's theories upon the subject? He has expressed them with more or less precision in various portions of his writings, so that they can be ascertained without much difficulty. They may be thrown together and formulated in this wise. Christianity teaches us to look to God as our Father, and to regard Him as loving us and caring for our happiness. Wyclif had a different conception of the Godhead. He held that by His eternal decree God has predestined some men to eternal life and others to eternal damnation. He has done so without regard to their merit or demerit, simply because it so pleases Him. This decree is so fixed and irrevocable, that man has no power in controlling it. He is deprived by it of all freedom of action in regard to his eternity. Hence it follows that God may justly be styled the author of sin.

Lechler[2] strenuously denies this conclusion, and maintains that according to Wyclif God is not the author of sin. "Wyclif," says he, "repudiates the conclusion drawn from the main principle that if any one sins, it is God Himself Who determines him to the act." In support of this assertion he quotes several passages from the philosophical treatises of his hero, in which under a cloud of obscure phraseology he seeks to hide the objectionable character of his teaching. Here in reply it is enough to cite Wyclif's own writings. "To me," says Wyclif, "it appears capable of proof that God necessitates every creature when it acts to every single

[2] P. 263.

action." And in another passage in the same work occurs this passage. "I recollect that I said in the first book that every thing that happens, happens by absolute necessity." Following out the argument he comes to this conclusion. "It is necessary that the purpose of God be of necessity accomplished, and thus every future event happens by necessity."[3] This treatise being written in Latin, was intended only for the learned, but our Evangelical Doctor had a message to the same effect for the shepherd and the ploughman. He illustrates his meaning for their instruction from the history of Judas. Judas, says he, was ordained to Hell, and this was his doom. For a time he seemed to be in a state of grace and did much good; but "he never went with Christ as His member."[4] In many of his other discussions respecting the Godhead Wyclif expresses himself in terms which shock our feelings. Speculating upon certain questions connected with the creation of the world, he enquires why God did not make it more perfect than it is; and he decides that He could not, basing his conclusion upon the following argument: If He could and would not, then He was envious;[5] if He wished to do so and could not, then was He deficient in power.

In perfect harmony with this doctrine, Wyclif held that the sinner who is foredoomed by God to eternal fire can

[3] *Trialog.* pp. 122, 154, 159. Here I cannot but remark that in the Index to his carefully prepared edition of the *Trialogus*, Lechler has passed over without notice these important passages.

[4] Arnold, ii. 113. This passage is referred to by Walden, i. 118.

[5] *Invidus* is the term used in the original. It is worthy of notice that Alanus de Insulis speaks of this same objection as being in vogue among the preachers of his own day (A. D. 1294?) and that they applied the word *invidus* to the Deity exactly as Wyclif did. Their sceptical objection took this form. *Si Deus ista visibilia fecit, aut ea incorruptabilia facere potuit, aut non. Si non potuit, impotens fuit; si potuit et noluit, invidus fuit. Cont. Hæret.* i. 3; Migne, ccx. 309. It is instructive to see Wyclif identifying himself thus closely with the hereties of an earlier century.

never have true contrition for past sin; this the great privilege of true repentance being reserved for the predestinate only.[6] The external act is no proof of the nature of the sin, for all the sins of the elect are venial, whereas all the sins of the reprobate are mortal.[7] Could any system be devised better calculated to drive to despair the returning sinner who wishes, in all humility, to repent of his past misdeeds, or to encourage the hardened reprobate to persevere in his course of wickedness? We need not wonder when we find Calvin readily accepting such a theory as this, which falls in so appositely with his doctrine of Absolute Predestination; nor need we be surprised to find that here, as in many other instances, he has borrowed his heresy from Wyclif.[8]

I ask permission to linger at this point for a few moments, in order to avail myself of the opportunity which here presents itself, of saying a few words to the admirers of Wyclif, as to the results which follow by a logical consequence from his teaching.

Let us see, in the first place, how this theory, which teaches mankind that God has decreed, and this without any foresight or respect of any sin (original of Adam, or actual of man), that those who are damned should be damned only because it was His will and pleasure, and for this end did likewise ordain that they should sin. Yet this is the doctrine of Wyclif, but from it follow certain results, both in respect to the man who sins and is damned, and also in respect of God Who makes him sin and damns him. In regard of man two absurdities

[6] *Trialogus*, IV. 24, p. 331.

[7] Bellarmine's remarks upon these and similar passages are important, and may be seen in his treatise, *De Amissione Gratiæ*, l. 1. cap. iv. 62, ed. Par. 1620.

[8] See his *Instit.* III. xxiii. § 2, where he speaks of the doctrine of the absolute power of God as a profane and detestable falsehood; (*commentum absolutæ potentiæ sicut profanum est, ita merito detestabile nobis esse debet.*)

follow. By the first, some men are made libertines and robbed of all religion; while others are driven to despair and cast off from all hope of salvation. The former class reason thus:—"God has predetermined of us, without any respect to our works, whether we shall be saved or damned. If we shall be saved, He will save us; if we shall be damned He will damn us. We cannot resist His will, do what we may. Why then strive against the inevitable? Let us leave all such questions to the Almighty, Who will execute it as He has decreed it."

There are others who pursue a different course, but no less dangerous. This doctrine of absolute decrees makes men desperate. "I am either predestinate or reprobate," says such a man. "If the former, a good life or a bad life matters not, for I shall be saved; if the latter I must be damned, so it matters not how I live. If I be reprobate, a good life can neither hinder hell nor help to heaven; if I be elect, a bad life cannot stand in the way of my salvation."

In vain to such men are all exhortations to piety, all arguments against iniquity. The law of God and the law of man become a dead letter. Why then are sins prohibited, laws established, sermons preached, Sacraments offered? Such a theory is an insult to the theory of man's reason, and the revelation which speaks to us of God the Creator and Christ the Redeemer. And yet Wyclif held such doctrines, and his followers profess to applaud him.

The doctrine of the intercession of the Saints with God for us who are still in this lower world was especially obnoxious to Wyclif, and he did his best to bring it into contempt. Here is a specimen of the way in which he indirectly ridicules the subject. "If you wished to obtain an interview with a King from whom you were about to ask a great favour, would you employ a buffoon to pro-

cure the audience for you? I do not mean to say that the Saints in Heaven are buffoons, for they are incorporated into Christ by the grace of the Saviour, in comparison with whom, however, they are lower than the buffoon is to the King."[13] Less dangerous by far is Luther's outspoken attack. "I would not give a halfpenny for St. Peter's merits. Of what use can they be to me, when they were of no use to himself?"[14] Of course the Invocation of the Saints was denounced by the whole body of the Reformers, the Church of England included, as not only foolish and vain, but as impious also; and their shrines and images were consigned to indiscriminate destruction.[15]

Yet Wyclif seems to have retained to the last a respect for the honour of the Blessed Mother of God, in which he certainly was not followed by those who professed themselves to be his scholars. It is due to him to record this singular inconsistency in his teaching. Lechler quotes a passage from one of his Latin sermons in which he teaches that the Mother of our Lord is to her worshippers a mediatrix full of mercy,[16] and salutes her as the *refugium peccatorum*. In his English sermons his language is equally outspoken. He invokes her protection for the Church.[17] She is to him "Our Lady," and the "Mother of God" (v. iii. 111.), he acknowledges the feasts of her Conception, Nativity, Annunciation, Purification and Assumption,[18] and commemorates her five joys (353). When faith failed in the Apostles according to his opinion, it remained fully in

[13] *Trialogus*, III. 30, p. 207.

[14] *Postilla Maj.* in Dominica VII. Trinitatis.

[15] Calvin, *Instit.* I. ii. § 11, and cap. xii. § 1 and 2. It is unnecessary to multiply authorities, but if further proof be needed, the Anglican Homily upon Peril of Idolatry will supply it abundantly.

[16] p. 299. [17] Arnold, i. 246. [18] *Id.* 345.

her (346). He held the doctrine of her perpetual Virginity; "She was a Virgin when she was wedded, and a Virgin ever after to her death" (354). He concludes his commentary upon the *Ave Maria* with the exhortation, "Trust we unto the words of the Gospel, and worship we Jesus and Mary with all our might" (111, 113). Notwithstanding this outspoken confession of his faith in our Lady he objects to offer the external honour which Catholics so willingly and so generally pay to her. His was a barren respect, a cold and dead recognition of the beauty of her example and the power of her intercession. It was at best a dead faith, and it profited him nothing.

I have more than once spoken upon Wyclif's theories respecting the reading of the English Bible; it may be enough, therefore, for our present purpose to show what his latest opinions were upon this subject. He received nothing as of authority besides the Sacred Scriptures, a conclusion which he thus expresses his own language. "Whatever the Pope or the Cardinals are able to quote from Holy Scripture, so much we believe, and no more. If they presume to advance anything more than this, we reject it as heretical."[19] So then the written word only, as interpreted at the discretion of the objector, is held to be the only authority which can be admitted in the decision of the controversy between the Catholic and the heretic.

Having laid down these fundamental principles, and thus secured for himself the right of dealing with all questions in which he was at issue with the Catholic Church according to his own pleasure, Wyclif has no longer any hesitation in pushing his premisses to their natural conclusion. He begins with the Church, and makes short work with it in regard both to the Head and the members. It is unnecesssary, says he, for any

[20] *Trialogus, Supplem.* cap. ix.

one to believe that the Church of Rome has any superiority over other churches; and to give her the title of Head of the Church is blasphemy.[20] The Church of Rome, continues he, is the Synagogue of Satan; the Decretal Epistles which are issued by it are apocryphal; and those persons are fools who attach any authority to them. The election of the Pope by the Cardinals is a trick of the Devil. To say that Peter had a power greater than that possessed by the rest of the Apostles is heresy; for St. James of Jerusalem was his superior.[21] To ascribe any authority, therefore, to the Roman see was, according to Wyclif, at once a folly and a sin; and to do so drew down the bitterest denunciations of the Vicar of Lutterworth. With him any such admission as this was the greatest of the many blasphemies about Antichrist, by which title he loved to designate the successor of St. Peter. He was justified, he said, in applying this epithet to him, for our Lord had done the like when He spoke of him as "the Abomination of Desolation." The same Doctor tells us that the Pope's anathema is to be disregarded; it can do neither harm nor good to any one. He has no power in any way, either over persons or things. The Pope has no jurisdiction; he cannot inflict a penance, nor can he imprison or censure a culprit; he has no authority in the consecration of bishops or archbishops, nor has he any right to punish heretics. His Indulgences are ridiculous cheats. Wyclif found some comfort, however, in thinking that the Pontiff, who at that time sat upon the Papal Chair, was the last who would occupy that position.

[21] See his treatise, *De Christo et Antichristo*, cap. v. (ap. *Wald. Doct.* II. i. § 2, vol. i. 244), where he says that to call any Christian the head of the Church is to blaspheme Christ. Yet he himself bestows that title upon St. Peter in one of his latest writings, *Suppl. Trialogi*, cap. iv. § 1, vol. i. p. 257. [21] See *Wald. Doct.* II. i. cap. iv. § 1, vol. i. p. 257.

From the Pope it was an easy descent to the other degrees of dignity in the Church, and Wyclif swept them all away, as far as he could do so, by the breath of his mouth. Cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, deans, officials, monks, and canons, one and all were doomed by him to swift destruction. They were all limbs of the devil, members of Antichrist; and they formed, collectively, that great diabolical Chapter of which the Holy Father was the head. By fraud, treason, and violence they had got possession of a large amount of property, with which they dealt as if they had acquired it honestly and held it legally. They had no right to it, and they might justly be deprived of it either by the Sovereign or the people. In one word, "they are devils incarnate," says the Evangelical doctor, "and it is a true and Catholic doctrine that no Christian ought to communicate with them in sacramentals." [22]

The clergy next occupied the attention of our Reformer. Addressing the secular priesthood (to which he himself belonged), he informs them that they are under no obligation to apply to their bishops for license to preach; for neither God nor man could hinder them. Bishops are not of Christ's appointment; they are members of the devil's Chapter. Institution or election does not make a man a bishop; he becomes one solely by predestination. Bishops retain to themselves the exclusive privilege of confirmation, ordination, consecration, and such like official acts, only for the sake of the fees which they receive for performing these empty ceremonies.

The monastic bodies, as well those which were endowed as the mendicants, fared badly at the hands of our Reformer. No language which he could command (and he was a master in the art of railing), was sufficiently strong to express his abomination of their mode of life, or to

[22] *Wald. Doct.* II. xvi. § 7 (i. 314).

accentuate the severity with which he would punish their supposed delinquencies. It might have been thought that the Begging Friars, such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, would have escaped the outpouring of the vials of Wyclif's wrath. They were poor men, poorly fed, poorly clad, living a hard life among the poor for the love of the poor and of God. But they were denounced in the same spirit of bitter antagonism, and for no other reason than because they were especially favoured by the Antichrist of Rome. Their poverty did not save them from the malediction of this scandalous priest, who launched upon their devoted heads the thunderbolts of his wrath from the comfortable and well-endowed rectory of Lutterworth.

In consistency with his theory of predestination, Wyclif had no respect for the sacraments of the Catholic Church. Why should he? To him and his followers they were nothing better than bare and beggarly symbols, having no meaning, and conveying no grace to the soul of the recipient. Baptism, said he, impresses no character and abolishes no sin; its only use is to signify the grace which has already been given to the infant. When the words of our Blessed Lord were quoted against him, "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God," he evaded them by asserting that by the water there spoken of was meant the water which flowed from the Side of Christ.

On the doctrine of the Eucharist it is enough to say that he boldly and openly declared his adhesion to the heresy of Berengarius, and thereby proclaimed the nature and extent his own. To attempt to record all the explanations, evasions and variations to which he had recourse when pressed upon this point, would be an endless task; suffice it to say that he died holding opinions directly in opposition to the teaching of the Catholic Church. He

even went further than his heretical prototype had done. Encouraged by him, women publicly said Mass in London, where also they celebrated the other sacraments.

Concerning the nature of Holy Matrimony the teaching of this profligate Reformer is so extravagant and so disgraceful, that it seems to demand a special notice. He lays it down then, as a primary condition, that matrimony was instituted for one purpose only, the procreation of children.[23] If this essential qualification be absent there is no matrimony. Hence it follows that there was no matrimony between St. Joseph and our Blessed Lady, consequently they lived together in a state of sin. And lastly, it may be remarked that this theory would lead to the conclusion, that a marriage which was not followed by the birth of children was therefore not binding upon the parties, and might form a valid argument for a divorce.

Such opinions are sufficiently startling, but his next speculations are yet more dangerous. In order to constitute a valid marriage, says he, no external rites are needed, such for example as those used by the Church in the celebration of Matrimony. No words expressive of consent need pass between the contracting parties. There need be no priest, no nuptial benediction, no witnesses.[24] He seeks to strip matrimony of its sacramental character, and he reduces it to the level of nothing higher than a civil arrangement between a man and a woman. It could be easily entered into and more easily thrown aside. It would be curious to ascertain, if it were possible, the moral condition of the parish of Lutterworth under such a rector. The advocates of "Free Love" may now

[23] *Trialogus*, IV. xx. p. 315.

[24] Here it is only just that I should quote the original passage: *Veritas quidem mihi videtur, quod assistente consensu conjugum et Domino approbante, subducto quocumque signo sensibili, foret satis.* (*Trialogus*, iv. xxii. p. 323.)

accept him as their high priest, and they may quote his name as the exponent and advocate of their opinions.

Wyclif experienced a formidable difficulty when he had to decide with himself the mode in which he would deal with the Sacrament of Orders. Failing health and increasing infirmities warned him that he was mortal, and reminded him that the day was far spent and the night was at hand. One agitating thought haunted him and gave him no rest. Who would carry on the warfare when he had gone? He knew of no one whom he could intrust with its prosecution. Nicolas Hertford, from whom he had expected so much, had deserted him like a false traitor and had made his peace with the Bishops.[25] Many others had followed his example. Wyclif aimed not only at permanence but perpetuity for his system, and he knew not where to seek it, or how to attain it.

When a man determines that he will silence his conscience he generally accomplishes the object which he has in view. So it was with the unscrupulous Rector of Lutterworth. Inventive in design and bold in execution he excogitated for himself a system which seemed to him to meet the requirements of the case. Looking around him he could not but notice the success which attended the work of the Mendicant Friars, and he determined to profit by their example. True, he hated them, and he had often expressed his hatred with that vehement bitterness of which he was such an accomplished master. But this mattered little at the present juncture. Their mode of life, their rule, the very habit which they wore, supplied the precedent for which he was looking and he converted them to his own purpose; so that Wyclif's heretical poor priests became thus far the followers of the sons of the saintly Francis of Assisi.

Several questions connected with these itinerant

[25] Wals. ii. 159.

preachers now present themselves and claim our attention for a moment in passing.

The exact period at which this project began to be put into execution has not been clearly ascertained, for its originator had no wish prematurely to bring it into notice. The first time that these innovators find a place in English history is under the year 1377, but upon this occasion they are mentioned in such terms as to show that their existence at Oxford might be referred to an earlier date.[26] In May 1382, they had become an annoyance and a scandal to their Catholic neighbours. The Archbishop of Canterbury found it necessary to write to the Bishop of London and the Father Provincial of the Carmelites at Oxford to express the sorrow with which he had heard of the doings of these "sons of eternal damnation." Under cover of their pretended authority to preach, they had advanced for some time past various heretical, erroneous and false propositions and conclusions, twenty four of which he cites. They had done this not only in churches, but also in the public streets and in various other profane places in the province of Canterbury, without having obtained either episcopal or papal authority. The persons to whom these letters are addressed are hereupon enjoined to adopt the most energetic measures to stop proceedings so objectionable, which threaten to overthrow the entire fabric of the Church and the peace of the kingdom.[27] The twenty four conclusions which follow are precisely those which were professed by Wyclif. We see then that at this date the movement had been fully organised, and was in active operation in London, at Oxford, and in various other places in the south of England.[28]

[26] Wals. i. 324.

[27] See Wilkins, iii. 158 (from Courtney's Register, fol. 25, b.); Coleti, *Suppl.* iii. 645; and *Fasc. Ziz.* Wals. i. 325. [28] Wals. ii. 59.

We should like to know from whom these tramps received their commission to preach and to exercise their other priestly functions. Some of them doubtless were really Catholic priests, who from one cause or another had found it convenient to seek a place of refuge in the camp of the enemy. As to the others, whatever authority they may have had, or thought they had, was such as Wyclif could give them, and nothing more. Such as it was they used it liberally, for even women availed themselves of this license and said Mass without self-compunction or the restraint of others.

Walsingham tells us in very distinct terms that these itinerating preachers took upon themselves the right to administer all the Sacraments of the Church; and this information was derived from the Bishop of Salisbury, to whom one of them, touched by repentance, confessed his error.[29] Wyclif himself had prepared the road for this daring piece of sacrilege by affirming that there are only two Orders, the priesthood and the diaconate, and that the priest and the bishop are identical, being only different names for the same office.[30] Thus then he only exercised his inherent right as a priest when he ordained others to the priesthood. He put forward the same doctrine in another form, tending to the same conclusion. He claimed for every deacon or priest the right to preach without the Bishop's license.[31]

The writings of our Reformer contain various other opinions which have been condemned by competent authority. They have been classified under several heads

[29] *Id.* ii. 188.

[30] *Audacter assero quod in primitiva ecclesia suffecerunt duo ordines clericorum, scilicet, sacerdos atque diaconus. Secundo dico, quod in tempore apostoli fuit idem presbyter atque episcopus. Trial.* iv. 15, p. 296. And the common people were taught that "By ordinance of Christ priests and bishops are all one." Arnold iii. 131.

[31] Wals. ii. 59.

according to the varying nature of their contents. Some are described as blasphemous, some as notoriously heretical; others are denounced as scandalous, or rash, or offensive to pious ears; or uncatholic and erroneous, or rejected by the Holy See. To comment upon these in detail is unnecessary, even if it were possible to do so within moderate limits. Yet the investigation if carried to its utmost extent would do no more than establish the truth which is sufficiently obvious already, namely that Wyclif is beyond doubt a condemned heretic. The Society which is called after his name cannot blot out the past. The evidence is conclusive, and here the enquiry may safely be abandoned.

CHAPTER VI.

Effects produced by the death of Wyclif—The growth of his opinions—History of William Swinderby—Of Sir John Oldcastle—Measures to suppress Wyclifism—Its continued advance—Who was Wyclif' teacher in heresy?

THE death of Wyclif produced no marked change upon the progress of his opinions among the people of England. His followers were as zealous and as successful in propagating them as they had been while they were yet guided by his advice and animated by his presence. Although no one, either ecclesiastic or layman, of an influence equal to that of the deceased Rector of Lutterworth, came forward to continue the warfare which he had proclaimed against the Church, still the spirit of bitter hostility by which he had been animated suffered no diminution of its intensity on the part of his successors. In one sense the movement was advanced rather than retarded by the removal of the heresiarch. His presence, while it confessedly had been a bond of union for his followers, had at the same time restrained the action and modified the aspirations of those more ardent spirits who had much to gain and little to lose. At his death his followers broke up into separate parties, each of which thought itself at liberty to pursue its own ends according to its own plans, regardless of the opinions or wishes of its neighbours; while, at the same time, every single individual of the party thought himself justified in carrying on this blessed work according to his own discretion.

We can easily understand the line of argument which was adopted by the Lollards, as the followers of Wyclif now began to be called, and we need not wonder at the conclusions to which it led them. These men appealed to motives which find a ready response in the pride of the human heart. Ignorant men listen with smiling complaisance to the voice which assures them that they are sufficiently learned to form their own opinions on all matters which concern themselves; that as every one best knows his own wants, so he best understands his own interests; that hitherto he had been held in bondage, and that the time has now come for him to vindicate his own independence; that he is wiser than his teachers, and no longer needs their instruction. Such suggestions as these soon produced their unavoidable result. The respect of the people for constituted authority, whether in Church or State, once broken down, every innovation in religion and politics was easy, and the descent from order to insubordination was natural and unavoidable.

From an early stage of its existence the practical mischief of Wyclif's teaching had shewn itself by a diminished attendance at Mass and a growing disregard for the holy Sacraments. Until the time of which we are speaking the parish church had been the House of God, to which His children had resorted as a privilege and a blessing. The Sacraments had always been regarded as the divinely appointed channels for the communication of Divine grace through the ministry of the Catholic priest, who at the same time was regarded as the best friend of the people. All this was fast coming to an end. The clergy were now regarded as a cage full of unclean birds,[1] the church was a house of abomination,

[1] One of the conclusions articled against William Swinderby was, "That no priest enters into any house but evil for to treat the wife, the daughter, or the wench; and therefore they said that I prayed the people that their

the Sacraments were a fraud; there was nothing true in this old-fashioned Christianity, and the sooner it was thrust out of sight so much the better for the poor man, whom it had cheated, misled and plundered. All the authority with which it had hitherto been invested was now transferred to the Wyclifite preacher.

Political causes, too, favoured the growth of the movement. The inglorious end of the reign of the Third Edward, followed by the unsettled condition of affairs as well abroad as at home during the whole of the unhappy rule of his successor, Richard the Second, occupying between them what we may reckon as an entire generation of human life, were periods admirably adapted for the seedtime and the growth of a popular heresy. Richard himself seems to have been brought under the influence of this anticlerical faction.[2] A long schism in the papacy augmented the evil. Under such influences ecclesiastical discipline grew weak, for the priest could not enforce it, and the culprit would not accept it. A powerful and active political combination among the nobles in the English Court was thus enabled to paralyse the action of the Bishops, who did not dare to enforce the authority with the exercise of which they had been entrusted.

husbands should beware that they suffer no priest to enter into their house." Foxe, iii. 115.

[2] Among the councillors appointed by Parliament in the first year of the reign of king Richard, was a certain master John Devrose (d'Evreux? See Tanner, *Bibl.* p. 226) who probably is identical with the "Deulrose," whose erroneous teaching is censured by Walden, iii. 821, 822. To the same influence must be traced the following remarkable exactment, the original of which is chronicled under the year 1381, in the Rolls of Parliament, iii. 101. "Be it remembered that the confessor of our said lord the king was charged, in the presence of the king and the lords, to abstain from coming or remaining in the king's household, save only on the four principal feasts of the year. And this was done by the assent of the lords at the request of the Commonalty, who had prayed the king to have the said confessor entirely removed from the king and his office."

Theories as to the rights of humanity, as to the origin of government, as to the limits of the obedience which the subject owes to the Sovereign, no less crude than dangerous, grew up among the working men; and the meetings and discussions which followed naturally increased the irritation and promoted the growth and diffusion of the mischief. Each of these several elements of discussion was in turn reflected back upon the others, so that at last, by their combined agency, a condition of things was brought about which augured ill for the future tranquillity of England.

We should form, then, an erroneous estimate of the religious condition of the kingdom during the reign of Richard the Second, were we to suppose that Wyclif was the only heretical priest of the time who rose in rebellion against the Catholic Church. Evidence to the contrary can be produced, and in such abundance that it becomes difficult to know how best to compress the information which it affords. The extracts from the Episcopal Registers with which we are acquainted, voluminous as they are, are yet too scanty and irregular to enable us to judge with precision as to the full extent of the evil; but they warrant us in concluding that the seeds of the mischief were widely sown and had taken deep root throughout England. We know that an active propaganda existed among the heretics. It had been formed and was supported for this very purpose, and it would seem to have been conducted with energy and success. I now proceed, in continuation of the subject to trace the history of some of Wyclif's disciples, who carried on his work when he himself could do so no longer. Here I shall avail myself, where necessary, of the collections of John Foxe; not because I trust his learning or his honesty; but simply because he quotes various Episcopal Registers and other sources of information, to

the originals of which I have been unable to obtain access.

John Wyclif died in 1384. In 1389 a priest of the diocese of Lincoln, named William Swinderby, was accused before his diocesan of holding certain heretical opinions; and having been found guilty he made ample revocation of the same and was admitted to do his penance. The revocation was full and absolute; the penance was performed publicly, "first in the church of Lincoln, then in St. Margaret's church in Leicester, also in St. Martin's church in Leicester, and in Our Lady's churches at Newark, and in other parish churches also, namely, those of Melton Mowbray, Helhoughton, Harborough, and Lentborough." But, regardless of his promise, this hero of the Reformation, "after these things thus done and wrought in the diocese of Lincoln, removed to the diocese and county of Hereford," where he resumed his old habits of unlicensed preaching, and taught his former heresies. Our authority for this statement is Foxe himself, who, however, has not one word of either surprise or censure for such conduct. Disregarding the prohibition which was served upon him by the Bishop of Hereford, Swinderby taught the usual heresies of Wyclifism, and seems to have been exceptionally vehement in his denunciations against the Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist. In the hope of converting him from his errors, the Bishop invited him to a personal conference, to attend which he provided him with a safe conduct. Of this Swinderby availed himself, and in the Bishop's presence he conducted himself with scant respect. Of the heresies with which he was charged he boldly admitted and defended some; some he denied absolutely, affirming that his words had been misrepresented; some he attempted to explain away by giving them a different meaning. The conference was

an entire failure. The culprit departed unmolested and contrived to escape for several years, during which he seems to have continued to propagate his opinions. At last, however, the day of retribution came. Foxe[3] identifies him with a certain nameless priest who, being a follower of Wyclif, was burned in Smithfield early in the reign of King Henry the Fourth.

To the history of Swinderby our Martyrologist thinks it "good and convenient next to adjoin the acts and doings of Walter Brute, his joint fellow and companion, being a layman and learned, brought up at the University of Oxford, being there also graduate." It is probable that these men were the immediate pupils of Wyclif while he resided at the University. Of the two, Brute was the more outspoken; and much information as to the opinions of the new school might be gathered from his discourses. Their great length, however, makes this impossible. Suffice it to say that Brute stood boldly forward as Swinderby's vindicator, and maintained the truth of the opinions for which his friend had been condemned. In the course of the discussion he advanced several heretical theories of his own;[4] but in the end he professed his willingness to abandon whatever errors could be proved against him "by the authority of Holy Scripture, or by any probable reason grounded on the Scriptures." A safe promise this under which to seek shelter, since by it he reserved to himself the right of deciding what was, or what was not, "probably grounded upon the Scripture."[5]

From Hereford the infection passed into Leicestershire, where certain persons, eight in number, were denounced to

[3] Foxe, iii. 108, 109, 131.

[4] Thus he maintained that in case of necessity, women might administer the Lord's Supper. Foxe, iii. 179.

[5] *Id.* p. 186.

the Archbishop for holding heretical doctrines respecting the Sacraments. Twelve of the Articles are enumerated by Foxe; they are of the usual character and require no special notice. The delinquents were cited but "hid themselves out of the way and appeared not;" whereupon they were excommunicated by name. "And further, the said Archbishop interdicted the whole town of Leicester and all the churches in the same, so long as any of the aforesaid excommunicated persons should remain or be within the same, and till all the Lollards of the town should return and amend from such heresies and errors, obtaining at the said archbishop's hands the benefit of absolution." Finally however some of the number recanted their opinions, and performed the penance which was enjoined them.

Were I to repeat all the instances of heretical teaching, which have been collected by Foxe as having occurred during the later years of King Richard's reign, I should exhaust the patience of the reader. Yet they are important as proving how widely this heresy had diffused itself among all sorts and conditions of men throughout England. In proof of this I ask permission to refer very shortly to one or two illustrations. We read, for instance of a nun of the monastery of St. Radegond, "who casting off the habit of her religion was found in secular attire, many years being an apostate and leading a dissolute life." We read of Matilda the anchoress, who had been guilty of a like violation of her profession. We read of "one Peter Pateshul, an Austin friar, who hearing the doctrine of John Wyclif and others of the same sort, began at length to preach openly and to detect the vices of his order, in such sort as all men wondered to hear the horrible reciting thereof." From these instances, and from others which he quotes, "it may appear," says the same authority, "how the Gospel of Christ, preached by

John Wyclif and others, began to spread and fructify abroad in London and other places of the realm."[6]

The next case which claims our notice is the notorious one of Sir William Sautrey, whom Foxe describes as "a good man and faithful priest, inflamed with zeal for true religion."[7] The facts however which were elicited against him during the present enquiry make his claim to this high title more than questionable. It appears from evidence then and there adduced, that two years previously, this Sautrey (being at that time parish-priest of St. Margaret's church in Lynn and also of Tilney), was cited before the Bishop of Norwich for holding certain heretical opinions, ten in number; that he confessed the same publicly in the English tongue, and admitted the same conclusions to be erroneous and heretical; "taking his oath upon a book that from that time forward he would never preach, affirm nor hold, privily nor openly, the aforesaid conclusions; and that he would pronounce them to be erroneous and heresies in the parish churches of Lynn and Tilney." Having made this recantation he obtained his liberty, which "the servant of Christ," as he is styled by Foxe, employed by migrating to London, where he repeated the doctrines which he had just before renounced. Examined, degraded and condemned, this "true and faithful martyr of Christ was the first of all them in Wyclif's time, that I find to be burned in the reign of King Henry the Fourth, which was in the year of our Lord 1401."[8]

Before the end of the first decade of the fifteenth century, the peculiar doctrines of Wyclifism had formulated themselves into a certain degree of consistency, which they maintained with a few variations ever afterwards. It becomes unnecessary therefore to give any detailed

[6] *Id.* iii. 199, 201. [7] *Id.* p. 222.

[8] See Foxe, iii. 228; Rymer, viii. 178; Rot. Parl. iii. 459.

extracts from the articles produced against such of the heretics as came under the cognisance of the bishop, such for instance as John Badby, William Thorp, John Purvey, and others, whose history may be read in the Protestant Martyrology of the industrious John Foxe. Upon occasion, however, some novel form of misbelief showed itself, and amuses us by its absurdity or shocks us by its profanity. Thus for instance, in "the trouble and persecution of the most valiant and worthy martyr of Christ, Sir John Oldcastle, knight, Lord Cobbam," we learn from Walsingham that search was made for this heretic near the church of St. Alban's, where he was supposed to be in hiding. The officers were too late, for he had contrived to escape before their arrival. In his flight he left behind him some of his books, one of which had once upon a time been the property of a devout Catholic, by whose loving care it had been beautifully illuminated with figures of the Saints. But the heads of all these holy men and women had been defaced and obliterated, as had also all the names commemorated in the Litany of the Saints as far as the first *Parce nobis Domine*. The name of our Blessed Lady had shared a like indignity. In the same hiding place were found some writings tending to her dishonour, which were of a character so blasphemous and disgraceful as to render any further description of them impossible. The abbot of St. Albans, into whose hands this volume came, sent it to the King, who forwarded it to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in order that the people might see how these reformed religionists venerated the Saints and the Holy Mother of God.[9]

The history of this Sir John Oldcastle furnishes an apt illustration of the practical working of Wyclifism. He "held and taught opinions of the sacraments, of

[9] Walsing. *Hist. Angl.* ii. 326.

images, of pilgrimages, of the keys and Church of Rome, contrary and repugnant to the renewed determination of the Romish Church." Not only had he maintained suspected preachers in the dioceses of London, Rochester and Hereford, but he had gone so far as to assist them openly by force of arms. The clergy, however, were anxious to recall him to his duties by gentleness rather than severity; and with this intention they laid a statement of the case before Henry the Fifth, with whom he was said to be a favourite. The King promised that he himself would discuss the matter with Oldcastle.

He did so, but he found the knight utterly intractable. When he was cited by the Archbishop he declared, that "in no case would he consent to these most devilish practices of the Priests." Having failed to appear in court after repeated citations, the law took its course and he was excommunicated. When arrested and brought before the primate, he conducted himself with insolence and violence. He scorned to accept the absolution which he might have had, and of necessity sentence was pronounced against him. But while its execution was suspended, in the hope that he might come to a better mind, he contrived to escape out of prison and to put himself at the head of his party, which then rose in arms against the Government. The insurrection which had so long been in preparation, now broke out in earnest. Headed by Oldcastle, the Lollards assembled in great numbers in St. Giles's Fields, where they were attacked and dispersed by the King in person. Oldcastle and several of the ringleaders were taken prisoners, tried and executed.

If we may believe the charges brought against these men, as they stand embodied in the legal documents then produced in court, they contemplated a revolution of the most sweeping character. The King and his brothers were

to be put to death; and a general overthrow of the existing constitution, both in Church and State, was to follow. All religious men and women were either to be killed, or compelled to abandon their Order and return to the world. All cathedrals, all parish churches, and all religious houses were to be plundered and levelled with the ground: and Oldcastle was to be appointed Regent of regenerated England.[10]

Startling as this project seems to sober readers of the present day, there is nothing in it which is inconsistent with the acknowledged tenets of the followers of Wyclif. It drew no indignant disclaimer from Foxe, as he told the story of the movements of these insurgents, and whose chief care is to prove that Oldcastle was not guilty of the crimes for which he was executed. According to this apologist of Oldcastle, his execution was a judicial murder, and it must be admitted that both the rebel and his vindicator had, from their own point of view, somewhat to plead in excuse of the outbreak. According to the principles of Wyclif, Henry and his brothers, being men who were living in mortal sin, as such had forfeited all claim upon the allegiance of the people and ought to be deposed. The Church of the State being in connection with Rome, might lawfully be destroyed, for thus they had become parts of the synagogue of Satan. Every religious Order had been hatched by the Devil; to annihilate the works of the evil one was to render unto God an acceptable service. The people had been defrauded of their inherent rights, which they were justified in attempting to reclaim. If a bishop or priest were in mortal sin, he could not ordain, nor consecrate the Eucharistic elements, nor baptise, nor perform any ecclesiastical function; and his blessing was worthless. No one could be master over another; no

[10] Foxe, iii. 336, 338.

one, while in mortal sin, was either lawful bishop or lawful priest. The people, according to their own discretion, could correct the shortcomings of their superiors. Parishioners could, if they pleased, take away their tithes from their own parish priests, and give them to another who was godly. Universities, colleges, schools, degrees and professorships, were remnants of paganism, and benefited the Church no more than the devil does. The disciple of Wyclif then had but to speak the sentence of condemnation against all the powers in Church and State; and then the saints might arise again to take possession of the land of their inheritance.

The frequency and the violence of these successive outbreaks at length attracted the notice of the community at large; and both the clergy and the laity were roused to activity. As early as A. D. 1382 (consequently before the death of Wyclif), the subject had been brought before the consideration of Parliament, and measures had been adopted which it was hoped would curb the growing evil. It was stated that many unlicensed persons were in the habit of itinerating from place to place and preaching heresy, not only in churches and churchyards, but also at markets and fairs, and in public places generally The tendency of the discourses of these men was to sow discord between the different estates of the realm and to cause disturbances among the people. It was hereupon decided that measures should be taken to suppress such doings for the future.[11]

It was not until the year 1395 that any active measures were taken by the Holy See to arrest the progress of

[11] Rot. Parl. iii. 124. The archbishop of Canterbury at the same time addressed a letter to all his suffragans which stringently enforces the same obligation. Wilk. iii. 158; Coleti, *Suppl.* iii. 645. The excommunication of Nicolas Hereford and Philip Repyngdon, already referred to, followed shortly afterwards.

Wyclifism in England. This delay was most unfortunate for the interests of the Church, but it admits of a ready explanation. The affairs of the kingdom, both at home and abroad, were unsatisfactory, and the nation felt that it stood upon the brink of a revolution. The condition of the Holy See was equally alarming, for it had been torn asunder for twenty years by a schism which had split the Christian world into two great divisions. The true Pope, Boniface the Ninth, addressed a letter to king Richard which shows that at last he had realised the actual danger of the English Church. Reminding the King that his subjects "the Lollards," not only preached their heretical doctrines openly among the people, but had even ventured to present them to the Parliament, he goes on to inform his Majesty, that he has exhorted the whole episcopate "to stand up in the power of God against this pestilent and contagious sect, and lively to persecute the same under the form of law." The king is invited to assist them in so doing, and to enjoin the magistrates and justices of assize to execute the authority with which they had been entrusted.[12]

This exhortion was attended by a speedy result. The clergy met in a provincial synod held in London, in which they condemned eighteen articles extracted, by a Franciscan named William Woodford from the *Trialogus* of Wyclif, by the direction of the Archbishop of Canterbury.[13] The punishment of heresy then became a much easier and more certain process than it hitherto had been; but Richard did not live to carry these regulations into execution.

In the year 1401, shortly after the accession of Henry the Fourth, that king took active measures for the sup-

[12] Dated at Rome, 15 cal. Oct. an. pontif. 6; and printed by Foxe, iii. 194.

[13] These articles are printed by *Coleti*, Concil. xv. 999, and in Browne's *Fascic.* Concerning Woodford, see Tanner's *Bibl.* p. 784.

pression of the preaching of false doctrine by passing what Foxe designates as "the cruel Statute *Ex Officio*." Its enactments certainly were sufficiently stringent. A variety of reasons however conspired to prevent it from becoming operative until the year 1409, and even then it was employed with considerable hesitation. Had the episcopate ventured to exercise the power which this decree placed in their hands, a barrier might have been interposed to the steady progressive advance of the evil. The Archbishop of Canterbury did his part manfully, but he was not supported by his suffragans. He enforced the existing laws which forbade the admission of strangers to preach in churches or elsewhere without the bishop's licence. He directed that no book made by John Wyclif should be read, unless it had previously been examined by the university of Oxford or Cambridge; and he absolutely prohibited the use of Wyclif's translation of the Bible, or any other unauthorised version. Much evil having arisen from the discussion of theological questions, it was ruled that they were no longer to be tolerated. The next article demands our special attention. After a merited compliment paid to "the ancient university of Oxford," the Archbishop feels himself obliged to admit that it "is now like to run into ruin not to be recovered," in consequence of the doctrines taught within it "under the new and damnable name of Lollardy." He enjoins therefore that the head of every house shall, once every month, enquire whether any inmate has proposed or defended any opinion contrary to the Catholic faith; and if such be the case that he shall punish the offender accordingly. This important document concludes by laying down certain new regulations by which the mode of procedure in the law courts against heresy might be rendered more easy and effectual.[14]

[14] Foxe, iii. 242.

Foxe triumphs in the thought that all this notwithstanding, so far was it off that the number and courage of these good men were vanquished, that rather they multiplied daily and increased. In confirmation of this assertion he mentions instances which occurred at London, in Lincolnshire, in Norfolk, in Herefordshire, in Shrewsbury, in Calais, and divers other quarters besides. In addition to the usual heresies respecting the Blessed Eucharist, these reformers held (as many others had done before them) [15] that any layman may preach the Gospel in every place by his own authority, without the license of his ordinary. That it is a sin to give anything to the preaching friars. That one ought not to offer at the funerals of the dead. That the confession of sins to the priest is unneedful. That every good man, though he be unlearned, is a priest. That the infant, though he die unbaptised, shall be saved. That neither pope, nor prelate, neither any ordinary, can compel any man to swear by any creature of God, or by the holy Gospels of God. That as well the bishop and the simple man, the priest and the layman, be of like authority, as long as they live well. And lastly, That no man is bound to give bodily reverence to any prelate.

Further extracts from Foxe become unnecessary, and I discontinue to give them, although there is no lack of matter. Charges of heresy on the part of the Church against the Lollards were of frequent occurrence, but the articles libelled against the accused present few variations. Where they differ, they differ rather in phraseology than in substance. The Lollardism which now set in occupies an intermediate position between the bolder heresies of the Albigenses, and the modified doctrines which found favour with most of the reformers of the sixteenth century. The interest and the importance of the work

[15] *Id.* p. 349.

undertaken by the rector of Lutterworth consisted in this, that he gave to the heresies, which until his day were so many distinct opinions floating in the atmosphere, a unity and a cohesion which they did not possess until they received it from his hands. Up to his time they were individualisms which had no necessary dependence upon each other. Wyclif's Oxford training, and especially the acquaintance with the method and phraseology of the schools which he had acquired, enabled him to combine them into a quasi-logical system, and to assign to each article its own special value. His genius was not inventive; he contributed very little that is original to the dogmatic teaching which passes under his name; for nearly every erroneous doctrine of his system can be traced back to an authority anterior to himself.

Whence did Wyclif derive these uncatholic opinions? Apparently from no single author. He never refers to any such source, nor has any such been pointed out by those who have studied his writings. The question has been asked more than once, and has never been answered. Yet Walden has quoted, and that more than once, the name of a certain William Hughes, or Hayes, the person from whom Wyclif derived many of his errors. To him he was indebted for the opinion that St. Peter was never at Rome, consequently never was bishop there; an honour which he was willing rather to yield to St. Paul.[16] Several other of his errors are mentioned by Walden. That this

[16] Walden calls him expressly *pædagogus nostri Wicliffi*. *Doct. Fid.* i. 273. And again in the passage referred to in the text (p. 270). *Hic locus est, quo ad erubiscendum invitemus Wilhelmum, nostri Wicliffi magistrum et præcipuum in materia præceptorem, dicentem B. Petrum nunquam fuisse Romæ, ideoque nec ibi fuisse episcopum, sed Paulum magis. Scriptura (inquit) sancta non docet hoc in Actibus, sed Legenda quædam apocrypha.* This treatise of Hughes here quoted does not appear to be extant, and his name does not occur in Tanner's *Bibliotheca*. See also Walden, i. 266. 419, who (at iii. 455) gives an extract from a treatise of his called the *Defensorium*.

individual did actually hold doctrines contrary to the orthodox faith is unquestionable, and it is equally beyond a doubt that he was Wyclif's teacher. Further enquiry reveals additional facts which place the character of this personage before us in a discreditable light. He was one of the insurgents who took a prominent part in the disturbances which broke out in Oxford in the election of the Chancellor in the year 1349. During these "grave and enormous dissensions," as they are described in the official document which was issued for their suppression, some persons were wounded and some were killed. The rioters interrupted the Masses which were being said in St. Mary's Church for deceased benefactors, and drove the officiating priest out of the sacred building. William Hayes (or Hughes) was one of those who was charged by name with having broken open the common chest of the University, and carried off the seal, the money, the books, and the other property which they found therein; and these they were ordered by the Government to restore under severe penalties. The history of this remarkable outbreak is instructive, marked though it be by sacrilege, plunder and violence, for it solves what hitherto has been a difficulty.[17] It shows us what manner of man he was to whom the future reformer was indebted for his principles; and we now recognise the source whence John Wyclif derived the two leading peculiarities of his character, his craving after heresy and his contempt for constituted authority.

[17] See the two documents printed from the Close Rolls in Rymer's *Fœd.* iii. 183, and Wood, *Hist. Oxon.* i. 171, ed. 1674.

CHAPTER VII.

Progress of Wyclifism—Visitation of the Diocese of Norwich—Examination of various Lollards—History of William White, a Lollard Preacher—"The Story of Margery Baxter."

In the previous chapter I have attempted to give an outline of certain political events which were the natural result of the doctrines professed by the followers of Wyclif. From him they inherited these doctrines, and in turn passed them on to their successors until they became the common property of the Reformation. There is no break in the pedigree of the heresy. We have seen what were the opinions professed by Wyclif, and how they were practically understood by his scholars in his own day. Following up the inquiry we pass on to make ourselves acquainted with the Lollards of the next century. Fortunately we can do this without any great difficulty and with much precision. In order to avoid the awkward task of mastering the abstract propositions into which these heresies were formulated, as well by their advocates as their opponents, I prefer to arrive at the same results by a simpler process. Let me invite the attention of the reader to the following abstract of a Register,[1] in which are recorded the Acts of a visitation of the diocese of Norwich, made by Bishop Alnwick in the years 1428, 1429, and 1430; a visitation which had

[1] I am indebted for the use of this important document to the courtesy of his Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, in whose Archives it is deposited, and to whom my most grateful thanks are here respectfully offered for the use which he has permitted me to make of it.

become necessary by reason of the "great number both of men and women,"[2] who themselves had fallen into heresy and were actively employed in teaching it to others.

But I am not the first enquirer of modern times who has had the opportunity of using this precious manuscript for historical purposes. It passed through the hands of John Foxe, the celebrated author of *The Acts and Monuments*, who has employed it largely in his voluminous compilation. Writing in the early part of Elizabeth's reign, he quotes it to show "how this profession of Christ's religion hath been spread abroad in England of old and ancient time, not only for the space of these two hundred late years, from the time of Wyclif, but hath continually from time to time sparkled abroad, although the flames have never so perfectly burst out as they have done within these hundred years and more; as by these histories here collected and gathered out of Registers, especially of the diocese of Norwich, shall manifestly appear. Wherein may be seen what men, and how many, both men and women, within the said diocese of Norwich, there have been who have defended the same cause of doctrine which is now received by us in the Church."[3]

From this passage then we learn that, according to the estimate of Foxe (and he was the typical author of the period), the persons who were delated for heresy in 1428 were identical in their faith with the members of the religion which had just been established by Queen Elizabeth in his own day. According to him the Norfolk Lollards were martyrs, because they suffered for the truth; and the truth for which they suffered in 1428 under Henry the Sixth, was identical with that which

[2] See Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, iii. 587, edit. 1844.

[3] Foxe, iii. 580.

triumphed in 1560 under Elizabeth. An important admission truly; and one which helps us to understand the position claimed for the new-born Establishment by one who had studied its origin, who had marked its progress, and who had contributed very largely to its success as the future religion of England. According to John Foxe the Church of England teaches the same doctrines as those which had previously been taught by Wyclif and the Lollards.

The question which first arises for our consideration is this:—Is there any direct evidence to show how, and from whom, these men and women of Norfolk learned this heresy? Foxe answers the inquiry. They all received it of one teacher, a certain William White, a scholar of Wyclif, who resorted into the county of Norfolk, "and there instructed these men in the light of the Gospel." From the same authority[4] we learn the history of the person who was so active in the introduction of heresy into that portion of England which until his time seems to have been comparatively free from this pestilence.

William White, then, was a priest, "well-learned, upright, and well-spoken." Such at least is the testimony of Foxe, who proceeds in the following strain: According to the saying of the Wise Man[5] "he was as the morning star in the midst of a cloud;" in confirmation of which we are told that he gave over his priesthood and benefice, and took unto him a godly young woman to his wife, named Joan. White knew, and so did his paramour, (and so did John Foxe) that no legal marriage could be contracted by a priest; but the doctrine respecting matrimony introduced of late by Wyclif, afforded them the easy means of evading the difficulty. This "upright and well-spoken priest," and this "godly young woman named

[4] Foxe, iii. 590. [5] Ecclus. xviii.

Joan," agreed to live together in sin, and their act calls forth no word of rebuke from the Martyrologist, generally so severe upon the sins, real or supposed, of the clergy. White, however, continuing to labour "to the glory and praise of the spouse of Christ, by reading, writing, and preaching," fell into the hands of the Archbishop of Canterbury, by whom he was charged with having taught certain erroneous doctrines. Among others were the following. He maintained that the wicked living of the Pope is nothing but a devilish estate and the heavy yoke of Antichrist, and that therefore he is an enemy unto Christ's truth. That the Romish Church is the fig tree which the Lord Christ hath accursed, because it hath brought forth no fruit of the true belief. That such as wear cowls, or be anointed or shorn (that is, all the clergy, secular and regular), are the lance knights and soldiers of Lucifer; and that all they, because their lamps are not burning, shall be shut out when the Lord Christ shall come.[6] It would be difficult to believe that the man who held such heresies could have been in other respects a loyal son of the Catholic Church.

When White was examined before the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1424, not only did he admit that he had taught these opinions, "but for a certain space he stoutly and manfully witnessed the truth which he had preached." Presently, however, he had the grace to retract his errors, and the mercy which was always extended to the returning penitent was willingly vouchsafed to him. He gladly accepted the usual penance, and there is no reason to suppose that it was not performed. What it was is not recorded by the Martyrologist; but had it been of exceptional severity we should probably have heard something more about it. His repentance, however, was of no long duration. Like the dog he returned

[6] Foxe, iii. 591.

to his vomit, "for after this, going into Norfolk with his said wife Joan, he there occupied himself busily in teaching and converting the people unto the true doctrine of Christ. At last, however, by means of the King's letters sent down for that intent and purpose, he was apprehended and taken, and brought before William, Bishop of Norwich, by whom he was convicted and condemned of thirty articles, and there was burned in Norwich in the month of September, A.D. 1428.

"This William White and his wife had their chief abode with one Thomas Moon, of Ludney. He was of so devout and holy a life that all the people had him in great reverence and desired him to pray for them; insomuch that one Margaret Wright confessed that, if any saints were to be prayed to, she would rather pray to him than any other. When he was come to the stake, thinking to open his mouth to speak to the people, to exhort and confirm them in the verity, one of the Bishop's servants struck him on the mouth, thereby to force him to keep silence. And thus this good man, receiving the crown of martyrdom, ended this mortal life, to the great dolour and grief of all the good men of Norfolk; whose said wife Joan, following her husband's footsteps according to her power, teaching and sowing abroad the same doctrine, confirmed many men in God's truth; wherefore she suffered much trouble and punishment the same year at the hands of the said Bishop." Such is the history of the life and death of William White, as it is recorded by his admiring biographer. Some further particulars are supplied by Thomas of Walden, which throw additional light upon several parts of Foxe's narrative, and which therefore deserve our consideration.

Walden[7] agrees with Foxe in telling us that White,

[7] Walden, iii. 412. This writer tells us that he had long been unwilling to believe that Wyclif had held this opinion, but that he was compelled to

being a priest, took to himself a young woman named Joan, whom he called his wife. He could not pretend to decide, he said, how it might be with others; but as for himself he was well aware that he did not possess the gift of continence.[8] He admitted, in the presence of the Bishop of Norwich, that he had taught that matrimony was free to priests, and that this was the doctrine of Christ, and had been publicly affirmed by Wyclif.[9] The celibacy of the clergy, he went on to say, was one of the inventions of the Pope, and was unheard of until the year 1000. The Apostles were all of them married men, and it was in their power to return to their wives from time to time, just as they returned to their fishing.[10] Walden confirms the report which Foxe gave us of White's heretical teaching in regard to the Saints, "Why should we ask them to pray for us? They are always praying for us; why ask them to do what they are doing already? It is well to exhort men to pray for us, for they grow weary and lazy. But it is not so with the Saints."[11]

Quoting one of White's writings, (known to us only from these extracts) we learn that he taught "that no honour is to be shown to the Crucifix, nor to the image of any Saint, or of our Lady. Trees growing in a wood are of greater value than such dead things, for they have life, and as such bear a nearer resemblance to God. It would be better to honour the trees with prayers, genu-

abandon this supposition in consequence of a sermon preached by him, which had recently come under his (Walden's) notice. This sermon is printed by Arnold, i. 364.

[8] White, says Walden (iii. 850) *carnem propriam accusavit, dicens tantam esse tyrannidum ejus, ut ipsis amplexibus fæmineis abstinere non posset.* Luther was of the same opinion and expressed it by word and action.

[9] See further, iii. 850, 851.

[10] English Sermons, i. 374, ed. 1869.

[11] Walden, iii. 417.

flexions, offerings, pilgrimages and lights, than to give them to a dead idol in a church."[12]

Here, then, we discover the filthy sewer whence flowed this puddle of unclean doctrine over the country of Norfolk. No agent could have been better adapted for the work than was William White. We have here a priest, who to the dishonour of his priesthood was living in a state of sin which he called matrimony, who having first taught heresy and then retracted his errors, finally returned to them and died in the profession of them. Nor was he the only agent of evil, for "about the same time also were burned Father Abraham of Colchester, and John Waddon," whom Foxe, as is his wont, designates by the title of martyrs,[13] simply because they were heretics, and as such he venerates them and gives them a place in his calendar of Saints.

So much then for the origin of the mischief. The hand of William White sowed the tares; let us now see how they sprung up and flourished among the wheat.

Following the information supplied by the Register already quoted, we learn that in the years 1428 and 1429, the Bishop of Norwich cited before him the persons hereafter named, they being accused of holding certain heretical opinions well known under the general name of Lollardy. Although, as Foxe more than once remarks, there is a certain degree of uniformity in the doctrines which they professed, yet in many cases each of them had his own favourite heresy, which he enunciated and taught with special energy and enthusiasm.

The first case which we quote from the Register is that of John Middleton, vicar of Halvergate.[14] He was cited to appear before the bishop, and having done so,

[12] For this extract Walden quotes White's *Twenty-sixth Conclusion*. See *Id.* iii. 940. [13] Foxe, iii. 592.

[14] Halvergate is six miles from Yarmouth.

on October 5, 1428, was charged with having been a common encourager and receiver of heretics; that he had harboured Sir William White, a notorious and condemned heretic, and William Baxter, of Martham[15] in his house, had received heretical books from them, and held heretical conventicles along with them. As he denied the charge he was dismissed for the time in order that he might have the opportunity of establishing his innocence; but he was required to appear again before the court on the 18th of December. On that day, he presented himself with his compurgators. Public proclamation was made for his accusers, but as no one came forward he was dismissed and reinstated in his former position. This case is worth notice, as showing that the court proceeded with all due deliberation, and showed no anxiety to act with unnecessary severity.

The next culprit who appeared was Margaret, wife of the said William Baxter, wright, of Martham, she having been accused of Lollardy and heresy. She admitted that she had comforted and sheltered William White, a notorious heretic, whose books she had carried and hidden for him. He had taught her certain of his opinions, such as the following. There is no Christian in the world save the man who keeps the commandments of God. She rejected confession to a priest, and ridiculed pilgrimages. No images ought to be adored in any manner. When Lucifer was cast out of Heaven, he found that he could get what he wanted here upon earth by the employment of "stocks and stones and dead men's bones." She objected to capital punishment. It was her opinion that every good man and woman was a priest, and that no one who was not a priest could enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Margaret Baxter renounced these opinions, and accepted the penance enjoined to her.

[15] Martham, six miles N.W. from Caistor.

John Baker, carpenter, of Tunstall, is the next person who was brought up for examination on the charge of "Lollardy." The opinions which he held present nothing exceptional. His confession and renunciation of his errors were readily accepted by the bishop.

The next citation is that of John Kinget, of Knelond.[16] He admitted that he had been guilty of sheltering and encouraging two notorious heretical priests and two laymen, who were also heretics; and further, that he had held and propagated certain erroneous doctrines. All of these heresies he now renounced and abjured, as well verbally as by a writing, which he confirmed by his seal and oath. A copy of this document is entered in the Register, from which we ascertain, with considerable precision, the opinions which he had taught. They were as follows:

That the Sacrament of Baptism (which the heretics in derision called "the shacklement"[17] of baptism) done in water in the form accustomed in the Church, is of none avail, nor to be pondered.[18] That confession of mouth made unto a priest is of none avail, nor is it pleasing to God; for confession ought to be made only to God, and to no other priest. No priest hath power to make God's Body in the Sacrament of the Altar, but God made all priests, and no priest hath power to make God, for God was made long time ere priests were made. No matrimony should be solemnized in the church, but only consent in hearts betwixt man and woman sufficeth for

[16] Now Nayland, in the parish of Stoke, in Suffolk.

[17] Because it shackled or fettered Christian liberty. In the same mocking spirit it was a common joke among the Reformers of Henry the Eighth's time, to give the bishops the name of "bite-sheep." Thus, in "A godly letter addressed to Bishop Bonner," printed in Foxe (vii. 713), occurs the following passage: "Your lordship is made the common slaughter-slave of all your fellow bite-sheeps,—bishops, I would say."

[18] That is, not to be regarded as of any importance.

matrimony.[19] No man is bound to fast on Fridays, vigils of saints, nor on other days and times "boden by the Church to be fasted." Prayer should be made only to God, and to no other saint. No prayer should be said, but only the *Pater Noster*.[20] No pilgrimage ought to be made, but only to poor people. "Ringing of bells is but Antichrist's horns."

Of these heretical propositions he made a full recantation, adding, that he confessed, detested, and despised his said errors and heresies, and returned to the faith of Rome and the Universal Holy Church. Penance was then enjoined him, and he was suffered to depart.

John Skilley, of Flixton,[21] miller, was even more advanced in his conclusions. He held that baptism in water was of little or no value if the parents of the unbaptised child were Christians. Confession ought to be made to God alone. No priest has the power to absolve a man from sin. In the Blessed Eucharist, after the words of consecration, the pure material bread remains upon the altar. The sole consent of mutual love between a man and a woman suffices for matrimony, without any

[19] Foxe attempts, by a discreditable artifice, to free his beloved heretics from the odium which naturally follows such an objectionable doctrine. "It is to be thought (says he) concerning these articles that many of them were either falsely objected against them, or not truly reported of the notaries." Concerning matrimony, "wherein they are reported to hold and affirm as though it consisted only in the mutual consent betwixt the man and the woman, needing no other solemnizing in the public church; and all because (as it is likely) they denied it to be a sacrament." (See p. 590.) Opposite this passage he writes in the margin; "The papists are but quarrel-pickers." And yet Foxe had the Norwich Register before him when he wrote these words.

[20] Concerning this peculiarity of the Lollards see Walden, iii. 111, 112.

[21] There are two places of this name in the county of Suffolk, one near Lowestoff, and the other near Bungay. Both of course are in the diocese of Norwich.

expression of words or any solemnization in a church.[22] Every man and woman who is in true charity is a priest of God, and no priest has greater power to administer any sacraments in the church than any layman has, who is not ordained. No one is bound to fast in Lent, or upon Fridays, and it is lawful to eat meat at all these seasons. The Pope of Rome is Antichrist, and the bishops and other prelates of the church are the scholars of Antichrist. The Pope has no power to bind or to loose upon earth. It is lawful to work on Sundays and the feasts appointed by the Church. Priests may have wives, and nuns may have husbands, and this is more commendable than to keep chastity. Ecclesiastical excommunications and censures are of no weight. No oath ought to be taken under any circumstances. No pilgrimages ought to be made. No honour is due to images of the Crucifix, or of our Lady. Holy Water is of no avail. It is lawful to take tithes and offerings away from churches and priests, for they make priests proud. The death of Thomas of Canterbury was unholy and unprofitable. Relics of Saints ought not to be venerated. It is not lawful to fight for any realm, or country, or to plead in law in support of any right or to escape from any wrong. Material churches be but of little avail and little reputation; for every man's prayer said in the field is as good as the prayer said in the church. Prayer ought to be said only to God, and not to any Saint. Ringing of bells in churches is only to get money into priests' purses. It is no sin to do contrary to the precepts and laws of Holy Church.

All these heresies and errors John Skilley, miller, had the grace to renounce. He was condemned to an imprisonment for seven years in the monastery of Langley, in the diocese of Norwich, during which time he was

[22] In his account of John Skilley no notice is taken of this article by Foxe, iii. 593.

ordered to fast on bread and water on Fridays; and for two years he was enjoined to stand along with other penitents in Norwich Cathedral upon certain days.

I have been induced to give the list of heresies held by this individual at considerable length, because it affords a fair idea of the heretical doctrines very generally taught at this time in Norfolk. Of the other individuals who were delated to the bishop, some held a few less and some a few more; but Skilley's recantation may be considered as an exposition of the average teaching which prevailed among the Lollards of the time.

The next examination is that of John Godsell, parchment maker, of Ditchingham,[23] which took place on March 18, 1428-9. He pleaded guilty to having given shelter and support to two Lollard priests, William White, and Hugh Pye. In addition to other heresies, he maintained that the Pope is Antichrist and the head of the dragon which is mentioned in the Scriptures; that the bishops and other prelates are the body, and that the begging friars are the tail. Every faithful man and woman is a priest and has the power of consecrating the Body of Christ, just as much as any priest. Servile work may be done on any day. The Catholic Church is the congregation of those persons only who shall be saved. All material churches are synagogues only; they are of little or no use, nor are they to be had in reverence. It is lawful to take tithes and oblations from churches and give them to the poor.

Godsell also renounced his errors and was ordered to do penance, the details of which are imperfect, several leaves being here lost from the manuscript.

The examinations were resumed on August 5, 1430, in the person of William Bate, tailor, of Sething.[24] He had

[23] Two miles from Bungay.

[24] Seething stands five miles to the north of Bungay.

been for some time in prison, and was led into Court in his chains. He held the usual heresies against the Sacraments, our Blessed Lady, the Pope, and the Church. In his opinion there ought to be no painters or sculptors.[25] He thought that it was lawful to withhold tithes and oblations from churches and curates, "so as it be done prudently." Bate denounced his errors and accepted his penance.

No criminal was cited before the court until the 9th of December in the same year, when John Burrell made his appearance. He had been the servant of Thomas Moon of Ludney, who, it will be remembered, allowed William White, the lapsed priest, and his so-called wife to reside in his house, when they were in hiding after having fled from the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury. He held the usual amount of heretical error, to which he added certain other opinions, novel at least in form if not in substance. According to him the Catholic Church is the soul of every good Christian. Every prayer devoutly said in the fields or woods is as acceptable in the sight of God as the same would be if said in churches with the same or equal devotion. It is useless to say prayers or to celebrate Masses for the dead, for the souls of all the dead are either in Heaven or Hell. This world is the only place of Purgatory. He, too, recanted and did the penance enjoined to him by the Bishop.[26]

The next culprit was "a tyler," one John Finch, of Colchester, who was brought into court in his chains, being a relapsed offender of some standing. Two years previously he had been before the bishop, upon

[25] The Lollards were dissatisfied with Wyclif because he had not expressed himself with sufficient energy against the introduction of images into churches; and they supplied what they considered to be a defect in his teaching by the violence of their own. See Walden, iii. 902, 903.

[26] Foxe, iii. 597.

which occasion he had pretended to renounce his errors, and had sworn upon the Mass-book that he would do so. Disregarding his promise and oath, he had frequently repeated his former doctrines and had taught them to others. He had also failed to present himself along with the other penitents who had undertaken, as part of their sentence, to appear in Norwich Cathedral during last Lent. He had denied the necessity and efficacy of baptism by maintaining that all Christians are already sufficiently baptised in the Blood of Christ's Passion, and therefore need no other baptism. He held that every one is bound to withdraw and keep back all tithes and offerings, and to give them to the poor. His sentence is thus recorded by Foxe:

He was enjoined this penance, namely, three disciplinings at solemn procession about the Cathedral Church of Norwich on three several Sundays, and three disciplinings about the Market Place of Norwich on three principal market days; his head, neck, and feet being bare, and his body covered only with a short shirt or vesture, having in his hand a taper of wax of a pound weight, which, the next Sunday after his penance, he should offer to the Trinity; and that for the space of three years after, every Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday he should appear in the Cathedral Church of Norwich, before the bishop or his vicegerent, to do open penance among the other penitentiaries for his offences.[27]

The master of John Burrell cited above, Thomas Moon, of Ludney, gave shelter to the fugitives White and his wife on their first arrrival in Norfolk. Moon appeared in the bishop's court on August 19, 1430, after an interval of two years from the date of the principal offence with which he had been charged. He was cited for having favoured and harboured five lapsed priests and eleven

[27] Foxe, iii. 598.

other heretics, and for having permitted them to keep schools for heresy within his house.[28] All this he admitted.

It was libelled by one William Wright, that Avice, wife of the said Thomas Moon, was of the same sect, and that she favoured them, and receiveth them oft; and also that the daughter of Thomas Moon was partly of the same sect, and could read English. Moon abjured his heresy and accepted his penance. The same Avisia, or Hawise Moon, was now compelled to explain her opinions. She had maintained, she said, that every man may lawfully withdraw and withhold tithes and offerings from priests and curates and give them to the poor people, and that he should do so is more pleasing to God. Also that the temporal lords may lawfully take all possessions and temporal goods from all men of Holy Church, and from all bishops and prelates, as also their house and harness, and give their goods to poor people, and that thereunto the temporal men be bound in pain of deadly sin. Every man and every woman, being in good life out of sin, is as good a priest and hath as much power of God in all things as any priest ordained by the Pope or Bishop.

John Skylane, of Berghe,[29] who came into the court in chains, admitted that he had for long time past kept schools[30] for heresy at Bergh, Colchester, and London, in which schools he had heard all the errors and heresies for which he had now been libelled. Among others he held that there was never Pope after the decease of Peter, and he that is called Pope of Rome is Father Antichrist, false

[28] Foxe (iii. 598) in his account of this individual passes over the fact that he had permitted schools for the teaching of heresy to be held in his house. [29] Foxe takes no notice of this person.

[30] The existence of schools for the teaching of heresy is frequently mentioned in these depositions. To the instances already given may be added that of John Abraham, of Colchester, cordwainer, who is said to have kept and held schools of heresy.

and accursed in all his workings; falsely and subtilly, under colour of holiness, deceiving the people to get himself good. He hath no more power of God than any other lewd man, unless he be more holy of living, and he hath no more power to make bishops, and bishops have no power to give Orders, nor to do other sacraments, nor to make priests; but all persons in the Church, from the highest to the lowest, and all their teaching and preaching, and all their "shakelments" be false, cursed, and untrue; only ordained by these priests to beguile and deceive the people, and to get them good to maintain their pride, their sloth, and lechery withal.

He held also that every good man and good woman is a priest. The four doctors, SS. Augustine, Ambrose, Gregory, and Jerome were heretics, and their doctrines are open heresies. Anon as any man is dead, his soul goeth straight to Heaven or else to Hell, for there is no other place of purgatory, but only this world.

Richard Fletcher, of Beccles, "a most perfect doctor in that sect, who could very well and perfectly expound the Holy Scriptures," had taught that the common blessing that men use and make with their right hand availeth nothing else "but to skere away flies."

We must now pass on to "the story of Margery Baxter, the wife of William Baxter, wright, against whom one Joan, wife of William Cliffland, of the parish of St. Mary the Less, Norwich, was brought in by the bishop and compelled to depose" to the facts which are recorded in the Register. The following narrative is a summary of them.

Joan Cliffland stated that on the Friday before the Purification of our Blessed Lady last past (A.D. 1429), she was sitting in her own house, along with two of her maidservants, all being engaged in sewing. They were joined by Margery Baxter, who had brought her work with her, and the women began to have some conversation together.

The Lollard was earnest with her friend to refuse to take an oath under any circumstances whatever, and to her exhortation she added these words of caution: "Dame, beware of the bee, for every bee will sting; and, therefore, look that ye swear neither by God, nor by our Lord, nor by none other saint, for if ye do the contrary the bee will sting your tongue and venom your soul."

The Catholic woman was silent, and her neighbour continued the conversation by asking the other what she did when she paid her daily visits to the church. "As soon as I go in," said the Catholic, "it is my custom to kneel on my knees before the Cross, and in honour of the Crucifix to say five Our Fathers, and as many Hail Marys in honour of our Lady, the Blessed Mother of Christ." "In so doing," said the other, "you do wrong. You ought not to pray before an image in such churches as those are, for God was never in any such church. He never left Heaven, nor will He ever do so. You will have no greater merit from Him for such genuflexions, adorations, and prayers made in such like churches, than a candle lighted and placed under the cover of the baptismal font can give light by night to those persons who are in the church. No greater honour is to be paid to images in churches, nor to the image of the Crucifix, than to the gallows upon which your brother might happen to have been crucified. Lewd wrights of stocks hew and form such crosses and images; and after that lewd painters gleer them with colours. If you want to see the true Cross of Christ, I can show it to you here in your own house."

The deponent having admitted that she would gladly see the true Cross of Christ, hereupon Margery, stretching out her arms, said, "Look here! This is the true Cross of Christ, this is the Cross which you ought to see and adore daily at home. You labour in vain when you go to pray in churches, and to adore images or dead crosses."

The heretic next attacked the Sacrament of the Altar. In answer to the request that she would define what she believed respecting that doctrine the Catholic woman said, "My faith is that after the words of consecration the very Body of Christ is on the altar under the form of bread." To this Margery said, "Your belief is wrong. If every such sacrament were God and the true Body of Christ, there would be an infinite number of Gods, because that a thousand priests and more do every day make a thousand such Gods, and afterwards eat these Gods.[31] . . . Know, therefore, for a certainty that by God's grace, the thing which you call the Sacrament of the Altar shall never be my God, because such a sacrament has been falsely and deceitfully ordained by the priests in the Church to lead the simple people into idolatry; for that sacrament is only material bread."

The conversation then turned to St. Thomas of Canterbury. It was natural that the Lollards should hate this great advocate of the independence of the Church, and herein they showed themselves to be the true descendants of John Wyclif. "The people call him a saint," exclaimed Margery, "but he was a false traitor and is damned in Hell, because he injuriously endowed the churches with possessions, and originated and supported many heresies in the Church, which seduce the simple people; and therefore if God be blessed, that same Thomas was, and is, accursed, and if that Thomas was, and is, blessed, then God is accursed. Those false priests who say that he patiently suffered death before the altar do lie; for like a false cowardly traitor he was killed at the church door as he was running away."

Margery proceeded with her maledictions, and from

[31] . . . *et postea tales Deos comedunt, et comestos emittunt per posteriora in sepibus turpiter fætentes, ubi potestis tales Deos sufficientes invenire, si volueritis perscrutare.*

past came to present grievances. "These accursed ones, the Pope, the Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops, and especially the Bishop of Norwich, and the others who support and maintain heresies and idolatries, reigning over the people, shall before long have the same vengeance as befell that cursed Thomas of Canterbury, or a worse. For they falsely and cursedly deceive the people with their false mawmetries [32] and laws to wring money from the simple people in order to support their own pride, luxury, and idleness. And you may be assured that the vengeance of God will speedily come upon them, for most cruelly have they slain the children of God, namely, Father Abraham, William White, a most holy and most learned doctor of the law, together with John Waddone and some other holy men of the fellowship of Christ. Of a truth this vengeance would before now have fallen on that Caiphas the Bishop of Norwich and his ministers, those limbs of the devil, had not the Pope sent over to these parts certain false indulgences, which that said Caiphas had falsely obtained, with the object of inducing the people to make processions, to benefit themselves and their Church; which indulgences brought the simple people into cursed idolatry."

As to the Sacrament of Baptism the said Margery held that no child born of Christian parents ought to be baptised with water, according to the rites practised in the Church, because such an infant has already been sufficiently baptised in its mother's womb. And therefore that "mawmetry" and idolatry which these false and cursed priests commit, by baptising infants in fonts within the church, is done by them only for the purpose of extorting money from the people in order to support these priests and their concubines.

The next sacrament against which the Lollard de-

[32] The worship of Mahomet, or any false worship.

claimed was that of Matrimony. Here she held that mutual consent founded upon mutual love between a man and a woman is sufficient to constitute a valid marriage, without the utterance of any other words, and without any solemnization within the church. In his history Foxe here omits the comments of Margery upon the Sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony, and resumes his narrative with her observations upon Fasting days.

Margery next informed Dame Cliffland that no faithful man or woman is bound to fast during Lent, or on Ember-days, or on Fridays, or on the vigils of the saints, or on other days appointed as fasts by the Church. Every man, said she, may lawfully eat flesh and such other broken meats as may chance to remain over in the house from the previous Thursday; and to do so is better than to go to the market and to get into debt by buying fish. She added that Pope Silvester appointed Lent.

She also told this deponent that William White, who was falsely condemned as a heretic, is now a great saint in Heaven; that he was a most holy doctor, ordained and sent by God; that she prayed daily to the same Saint William White, and would continue to do so every day of her life, begging that he would vouchsafe to intercede with the God of Heaven.[33] This same William willed her, said Margery, to follow him to the place of his execution, because she would see that there he would perform many miracles. He would there convert the people by his preaching, and would cause them to rise and slay all those traitors who opposed him and his doctrine, which was the law of Christ. She admitted that she did accompany him to the place of his execution, being anxious to see what would happen. But when this William was about to begin to preach the Word of God

[33] This passage also is omitted by Foxe, as likewise the assurances given by Saint William of what he would do at the time of his execution.

a certain devil, one of the disciples of Bishop Caiphas, struck him on the mouth, and thus closed the lips of the teacher, so that he could not proclaim the Word of God.

The deponent also said that Margery assured her that she would never go on pilgrimage to "Mary of Falsingham,"[34] or to any other saint, or place. She praised the wife of Thomas Moon as a most holy woman, and one well learned in the doctrine of William White. A nephew of Richard Belward was also recommended as a good and learned man. We learn from another witness that this same personage (who resided at South Elmham,) had a New Testament in English, which he had bought in London for four marks and forty pence, and that he taught William Wright and Margery his wife, and wrought with them continually by the space of one year, and studied diligently upon the said New Testament.

Margery now suggested that Dame Cliffland and Joan her maid should come secretly by night to her chamber, and there should hear her husband read to them the law of Christ, which was written in a book which he was in the habit of reading upon such occasions. She said that her husband was well learned in Christianity; and she also spoke in high terms of one Joan West (who resided in the Churchyard of St. Mary in the Marsh), who, she assured her, was in a good way of salvation.

At this point the forbearance of Dame Cliffland seems to have been exhausted, or her faith to have been shocked by the revelations and proposals made to her by the Lollard woman who was sitting by her. The change, whatever it may have been, or however manifested, did not escape the observation of Margery Backster. "Joan," said she, "it seems to me by your countenance that you intend to reveal to the Bishop the disclosures which I

[34] Possibly a local pronounciation, or it may be another instance of the play upon words already referred to. See p. 150, note.

have made to you." "That I will never do," said the Catholic woman, "unless you give me occasion." Then said Margery unto this deponent: "If you deceive me I will serve you as I once served a certain Carmelite of Yarmouth, although he was the best learned man in the whole country."

"And what did you do to him?" inquired her neighbour. Margery then told her story. She had met the friar, she said, and had fallen into conversation with him, in the course of which she had rebuked him because he was of a mendicant order. "It were no alms," said she, "if I were to give you anything unless you will cast off your habit and take yourself to the plough. In so doing you will please God more than by following the life of such fathers as these are."

"The friar then asked me," she said, "whether I could tell him, or teach him anything more, whereupon I declared to him the Gospel in English; after which he left me, and afterwards accused me of heresy. Hearing this, I accused him in turn with having made wicked proposals to me, and affirmed that because I would not consent, he had charged me with heresy. When my husband heard of this he would have murdered the friar, who upon this took fright and left this part of the country. Nothing more was heard of the charge of heresy."

This Lollardess had not yet finished her confidences. She told Dame Cliffland that she had frequently made false confessions to the "Dean of the Fields," with whom she wished to stand well, in consequence of which he often gave her money. The deponent then inquired: "Did you ever confess all your sins to a priest?" Margery answered that as she had never harmed any priest, so there was no reason why she should confess herself to any priest, or obey any priest; "for no priest," said she, "has power to absolve any man from his sins. Priests

sin every day more frequently than other men do; and every man and every woman who think as we do are good priests, and the Church is only in such places as are inhabited by our people. Therefore confession ought to be made to God only, and to no other person."[35]

The said Margery told this deponent that in praying before images of our Lady and the saints the people did honour to the devils who fell from Heaven along with Lucifer. When these devils fell upon the earth they entered into the images which were standing in churches, and have long lurked and dwelt in them, and they dwell in them still; so that the people who adore these images commit idolatry. She said moreover that blessed water and blessed bread are but trifles, and are things of no force. Bells ought to be cast out of the churches and destroyed, and the persons who first ordained them ought to be excommunicated. She also said that she would not be burned, even though she were convicted of Lollardy, because she had, and has still, a charter of salvation *in utero suo*.

The above depositions were confirmed by Joan Grymle and Agnes Betham, the two servants of William Cliffland, who heard the above conversation between their mistress and Dame Margery.

The Register from which this information is derived leaves us in ignorance as to the fate of this active missioner of Lollardy. No further notice of her occurs in the manuscript, which however is imperfect, several leaves being lost at this point.[36] It may be remarked, however, that in no instance which it records was capital punishment awarded; the accused parties admitting the truth-

[35] The passage from, "and every man," to the end of the sentence is omitted by Foxe.

[36] The Register was imperfect at this point in Foxe's day, see his *Acts*, ii. p. 596.

fulness of the charges brought againt them, recanting the heresies which they had previously maintained, and thankfully accepting the penance enjoined by the Bishop or his commissary.

Dame Margery Baxter was a very confirmed Lollard, and the opinions which she held were announced with a precision and thoroughness which leave us in no doubt as to what she meant. But herein she is surpassed by the outspoken brutality of one William Coleyn, skinner, of Creake, near Burnham Westgate, whose examination is here recorded. He was examined upon October 23, 1429, and the answers which he made to the articles with which he was charged are entered with scrupulous fidelity. They are are so repulsively indecent and at the same time so blasphemous that it is impossible to quote them, even under the disguise of the Latin in which they have come down to us.[37] It is enough for our purpose to say that he advocated doctrines which have appeared among us of late as what is styled "free love." In one form or another the same principles are advocated in nearly every case of Lollardy; for Lollardy, like many other heresies, always waged a fierce war with the Sacrament of Matrimony. It was reserved, however, for William Coleyn to teach us the real drift and meaning at which these heretics aimed, and we can now figure to ourselves the condition into which society would have been reduced had they been able to carry out their principles into action.

Here we reluctantly bid adieu to the Norwich Register, for its revelations are not yet exhausted. It has afforded us a valuable insight into the practical working of Lollardism as it existed among our ancestors. The precision with which it deals with the inquiry in which we are interested gives it an exceptional importance, and

[37] No trace of them appears in Foxe's abstract of the Register.

places it beyond the reach of hostile criticism. The date, the locality, the nature of the court before which the offenders were summoned, the depositions of the witnesses who were examined, the mode in which the charge was met by the party inculpated, and finally, the sentence pronounced, are all entered with judicial accuracy. As a piece of documentary evidence upon the questions which it discusses this Norfolk Register is of the highest authority.

One more reflection and then we conclude. These depositions are valuable inasmuch as they give us to see how the doctrines of Lollardism were understood by the people. When they are propounded by their favourers they are minimised, and clothed in the least offensive aspect which they can be made to assume. Here we have them as they were taught and believed by the labouring classes of the common people. Foxe, as we have seen, maintained [88] that in the cases of Wyclif and the Wyclifites the charges were unfairly dealt with, "the votaries either mistaking what they said or misunderstanding what they meant." In the presence of this Norwich record any such charge becomes utterly untenable. When the "Martyrologist" ventures to suggest that documents have been falsified to the damage of the case of his clients he places himself in a dangerous position, and provokes a rejoinder. Foxe had access to this Register, and he has used it as far as suited his purpose. Did he use it honestly? The reader who has followed our extracts is in a position to answer the enquiry, and we leave the decision of the question in his hands.

[88] Foxe, iii. 589.

CHAPTER VIII.

Heresy in Norfolk and Suffolk, in Essex, in London, in Scotland—History of Reginald Peacock—Heresy in Salisbury, Rochester, Kent, Lincoln —Origin of these opinions.

A CAREFUL examination of the Register of Bishop Alnwick of Norwich, a document which we introduced to the notice of our readers in the last chapter, suggests many questions connected with the history of the Lollards in England: more indeed than at present we can venture to discuss. To some few it furnishes a satisfactory reply, but it leaves us in comparative ignorance respecting many more. Upon one subject especially we have no satisfactory information. Was the ecclesiastical condition of the diocese of Norfolk, as exhibited in this record, a fair average of the general state of religion throughout England? At present we have no means of answering the inquiry, nor can any approximate reply be made until the existing episcopal registers of every see shall have been examined. But as far as we may venture to speculate we see no grounds for believing that Norwich was either better or worse than its neighbours. There were no special reasons why it should be so. It offered no exceptional facilities for the introduction or progress of the heresy; and, but for the revelations of this damning record which we have just quoted, we might reasonably have supposed that it would have enjoyed a comparative immunity from the aggressions of the Wyclifites. Its geographical position was in its favour, it did not lie in the direct line of communication between the north and the south of the

realm, it was remote from Oxford, the seat of the intellectual movement to which Lollardism traced its origin, (but falsely), and its inhabitants did not willingly associate with strangers. None of its bishops had evinced any tenderness towards Lollards, and one of them had punished those turbulent spirits with a wholesome severity which has already been noticed. Walsingham tells us how Bishop Henry Le Spencer had fallen upon such of the Lollard insurgents as had taken up arms under the leadership of Jack Litster, and that he had effectually crushed the rebellion within his diocese.[1] The smart of such a castigation would not easily be forgotten, and it might reasonably have been imagined from all these considerations that Norfolk and Suffolk would present anything but an inviting field in which an enemy should sow the cockle. Yet we have seen that there it had been scattered with a lavish hand, and that it had brought forth fruit abundantly. And, as Satan never sleeps, we may conclude that he was equally busy elsewhere throughout the whole of England.

But if we have not all the information we could desire, we are not left entirely to speculation or conjecture. Although the material which we have at our disposal is by no means so rich as we could wish, yet it does not leave us entirely in the dark. The Registers of the Archbishops of Canterbury, the contemporary documents contained in the General Record Office, the treasures in the Library of the British Museum, supply a series of documents which permit us to proceed on our inquiry with a certain amount of reasonable confidence. Guided by them, and by the information supplied by other works of acknowledged reputation, we venture to continue our inquiry as to the progress of Lollardy in England from the conclusion of the period illustrated by the Norwich Register.

[1] Walsingham, ii. 7.

We still linger in the diocese of Norwich, reminding our readers, however, that they are now entirely at the mercy of Foxe, whose honesty of quotation we can no longer test by the readings of the original register. The unscrupulous audacity of the author of *The Acts and Monuments* in the suppression and falsification of evidence has so frequently called for our censure of late, that this caution is not only justifiable but necessary. Taking then his narrative as we find it, we gather some instructive illustrations of Wyclifism as it existed during the reign of King Henry the Sixth.

In 1431 one Nicolas Canon, of Eye, was brought before the Bishop of Lincoln, and required to answer to certain articles objected against him. The subjoined articles and answers are taken from Foxe.[2]

On Easter Day the parishioners of Eye went about the church in solemn procession. The accused, "as it were mocking and deriding the other parishioners, went about the church the contrary way and met the procession." He answered that he thought he did well in so doing.

Did he on Corpus Christi Day, at the Elevation, when all were doing reverence unto the Sacrament, go behind a pillar and turning his face from the High Altar, mock them that did reverence unto the Sacrament? He acknowledged it, and affirmed that he believed to do well in so doing.

On All Hallows' Day, at the Elevation at High Mass did he, carrying a torch, go up to the High Altar, and standing behind the Priest's back, stand upright upon his feet, turning his back to the Priest and his face towards the people, and would do no reverence to the Sacrament? This article he acknowledged, affirming that he thought he had done well in that behalf.

At a later examination he confessed that he doubted

[2] iii. 599.

whether, in the Sacrament of the Altar, there were the very Body of Christ, or no.

We cannot wonder that such an offender should be declared an heretic, and that a penance should be enjoined him for such grievous offences. His fate is uncertain. On a subsequent page (702) Foxe speaks of him as having been burnt: but of this there is no evidence.

In the year 1431, a Convocation of the Prelates and Clergy of the Southern Province was again held in the Church of St. Paul's, before whom the Bishop of London brought up one Thomas Bagley, Vicar of Maldon, in Essex, who was charged with holding certain erroneous opinions. Bagley produced a written confession of his faith, in which he affirmed his belief that the venerable Sacrament of the Altar is the Body of Christ in figure, but not the Body of Christ in its own nature. He did not believe, nor would he believe, that by virtue of the sacramental words the priest makes Christ, or God. He spoke against pilgrimages, vows, prayers for the dead, images, and some other Catholic devotions. Several bishops, especially the Bishop of Rochester, began to argue with him, and tried to induce him to retract his opinions, but in vain. On the contrary, he affirmed in public that he was ready to die for them, "and in so doing to keep to the doctrine of Master John Wyclif, who, as he asserted, held the same conclusions and opinions." He further said that he would rather trust the said Master John than St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, or St. Ambrose. In order to bring him to a better mind, the Bishop offered to show him the contrary teaching in the handwriting of Wyclif himself, yet he persisted in maintaining his former assertions. Among many other evil speeches which he uttered this was one; namely, that, in his opinion, John Wyclif had a loftier seat in Heaven than the Blessed Thomas of Canterbury. Finding him thus

impracticable, he was dismissed for the present, and time was afforded him for deliberation.

When next he appeared before the Convocation, his sentiments were unchanged, or rather, he had still further receded from the truth, for now he spoke very evil words against all the sacraments. Several adjournments took place, and it was not until the case of this stubborn heretic had been under the consideration of the meeting for three weeks that he was handed over to the secular power. Foxe,[3] (who dismisses his case in six lines) tells us, on the authority of Fabian, that "he was degraded and burned in Smithfield," and at the same time designates him as a valiant disciple and adherent of Wyclif.

The history of a priest named Richard Wiche, who is said by Fabian to have been burnt on Tower Hill as a relapsed heretic in 1440, is told, but very obscurely, by Foxe.[4] After his death, he was "sainted" by the people, many of whom called him a holy man, and coming to the place of execution, "there made their oblations and upreared a great heap of stones and set up a cross there by night."[5] The same authority prints a copy of a proclamation, from which we learn that he, being a relapsed heretic, was degraded by the Bishop of London, "and being turned over to the secular power, as the manner is," was, according to the law of the realm, consumed to ashes. Some of his admirers, however, were not afraid publicly to affirm that the said Richard was altogether innocent of heretical pravity, and to blaze abroad that he was, and died, a good, a just, and a holy man, and that he did many miracles. The Sheriffs of London and Middlesex were hereupon required by the King's writ, "straitly charging that no person from henceforth presume to resort to the place where the said Richard was executed, under

[3] *Id.* p. 600; Wilk., *Conc.* iii. 517.
[4] *Id.* p. 702.
[5] Foxe, iii. 702.

colour of a pilgrim, nor send any offering thither, nor worship him hereafter openly or secretly."[6]

From the north of England the heretical doctrines of the Lollards penetrated as a matter of necessity into Scotland, where in due course of time they attracted the attention of the Churchmen of the district where they had taken root. They have left behind them unmistakable traces of their existence on the north of the Tweed. The chief promulgator of them was a priest named James Resby, who, probably had been driven thither by the prosecutions for heretical pravity which followed upon the death of Wyclif. He certainly was of his school, as we are informed by Walter Bower, the continuator of the historian Fordun.[7] Falling under the notice of Master Laurence of Lundoris, Abbot of Scone, Resby was by him apprehended, examined, convicted of heretical teaching; and continuing obstinate in his errors, he was burnt at Perth in the year 1407. He was charged with holding forty heretical opinions, all of them extracted from those propositions of Wyclif which had been condemned at London in 1380. The historian Bower tells us that even at the time when he wrote, some of the tracts of this false English teacher were carefully preserved by the Scottish Lollards.

The prevalence of such novel opinions is evident by the terms of the oath which was taken by all Masters of Arts in the newly founded University of St. Andrew's, by which they were required to swear that, to the best of their ability, they would defend the Church against the assaults of the Lollards and all their adherents.[8]

[6] Dated 15 July, 18 Hen. vi. "Like writs, and to the same effect, were directed to all the sheriffs through all the realm, bearing all one and the same date; by virtue of which letters the mayor and sheriffs did use such diligence that shortly after that concourse and seeking of the people was left off." Foxe, *Id.* [7] Book xv. ch. 20; vol. i. p. 441.

[8] See an extract from the enactment of June 10, 1416, in M'Crie's *Life of Melville*, i. 419.

In the year 1431 (or 1433), we find that one of Wyclif's scholars, named Paul Crawe had wandered from Bohemia into Scotland, where he was arrested and examined by Henry Wardlaw, Archbishop of St. Andrew's. He was charged with heretical teaching on the Sacrament of the Eucharist, on the honour due to saints, on confession, "with other of Wyclif's opinions." Proving himself an obstinate heretic, he was handed over to the secular power and burnt. Bower affirms that he was sent from Prague into Scotland by the Bohemian heretics for the express purpose of propagating Lollardism, and that he came in the character and under the disguise of a doctor of medicine.[9]

If we may believe the charges which more than one of the chroniclers of the time bring against the higher orders of the clergy, the rapid spread of the doctrines of Wyclif (of which the proofs are too numerous to be questioned), was due in no small degree, to the inertness of the Bishops. That they were aware of the extent of the impending danger must be admitted, but that they could avert it may well be doubted. As far as their powers went, it seems to me they exerted themselves to the utmost, and it would be unfair to charge them with having failed in a sphere of action within which they had no jurisdiction. They have received scant justice at the hands of the chronicler of St. Alban's, who, having enlarged upon the aggressions of the Lollard preachers, tells us that the whole of the episcopate knew these things, heard them and saw them, and yet they went away, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, leaving their flocks exposed to the ravening wolves, against whom not one of them had the courage to raise his pastoral staff.[10] Yet the

[9] Fordun, *Scotichronicon* ii. 495. See also a valuable note by Laing in his edition of the works of John Knox, i. 464.

[10] Walsingham, ii. 188. He excepts the Bishop of Norwich, to whose prompt severity reference has already been made.

Bishops were not regardless of the duty which they owed to their flocks. Convocations were frequently held, and their proceedings evinced considerable zeal; provincial councils met, and learned men were appointed by competent authority to refute the heresies which were fast becoming so popular.[11] Notwithstanding these efforts it was obvious to all who had cared to enquire into the matter, that the country was being overrun by numerous bands of itinerant missioners, who, wherever they went, claimed for themselves unrestrained authority to preach, a privilege which until now had been conceded only to the parish priest by virtue of his ordination. Every Catholic knew that this was a claim which rested upon no foundation whatever, but it satisfied the newly gained convert to Lollardism; it won him from the truth, on which until now he had trustingly rested, and held him in the bondage of error. So long as priests only played at ordaining other priests, however great might be the scandal, the danger was not great. But it might become greater. What if some bishop of the Catholic Church should lapse into heresy, and take upon himself to ordain Lollard priests? Such a calamity as this was possible, and if it became a reality it would introduce an element of discord into every order, every grade of the Church, and might go on, step by step, in its process of decomposition, until in time it should lead to a schism. And such an event seemed to be at the very door, for it was found, about the period at which we have arrived, that a bishop of the Catholic

[11] It would be tedious were I to attempt to enumerate the theologians who wrote against the Lollards and their master. It may suffice to mention the most valuable of their number, Thomas Netter, of Walden (hence called Waldensis), Provincial of the English Carmelites and confessor to King Henry the Fifth, whose *Doctrinale* is of the highest value for the illustration of the subject before us. See Cave, *Hist. Litt.* ad an. 1406.

Church of England had identified himself with the doctrine of Lollardism.

Reginald Peacock seems to have been born shortly after the death of John Wyclif. He was successively Provost of Oriel College, Bishop of St. Asaph, and finally, Bishop of Chichester. In the earlier years of his episcopate, Peacock made himself conspicuous by the vehemence with which he defended the Order to which he belonged, from certain charges brought against it by the populace. He vindicated himself and his brethren from having neglected to preach to their flocks, and strove to show that they were not bound to residence within their respective dioceses; two commonplace objections to which the episcopate of that age was especially open. He was the apologist for whatever were considered the most objectionable abuses of the Papal system, and it seems to have been habitual with him to embitter every discussion which he had undertaken to mitigate.

Peacock's indiscreet mode of argument provoked a corresponding amount of opposition. In the outcry against himself he contrived to engage the whole English Episcopate, and the battle grew hot around himself, the central figure of the fight. It was soon found, however, that he was deficient in nearly all the qualifications which are required in a successful general. He was unsafe in his judgments, he could not enforce discipline, and his courage was more than questionable. Friends deserted him, enemies profited by his mistakes, and his presence of mind wavered. Those who took any part at all in the struggle took part against him, and at length, towards the close of the year 1457, the hatred long entertained against his person, and the opinions into which he had drifted, burst forth with unrestrained fury. The charges which were brought against him were of

various kinds, but culminated in the accusation of his acceptance of the errors and heresies of Wyclif.

Foxe ventures to make the assertion that Peacock knew that he was guilty of heretical teaching, and that he had attempted to promulgate his doctrines in secret.[12] This view of the case is unjust to the Bishop's honesty and (so far) to his courage. There could be little difficulty in ascertaining whether or not he had taught unsound doctrine, for his writings were numerous, and he admitted that they were of his composition when they were produced against him.

After some delay occasioned by the examination of these writings, he and his accusers appeared in public court before the Archbishop. The doctors who had been entrusted with the office of censorship reported to the assembled prelates that Peacock's writings contained many errors and heretical opinions. The Bishop Elect of Exeter is reported to have said to the accused, "My Lord of Chichester, the just judgment of God permits you to be thus rebuked, for that you yourself rebuked those holy doctors St. Jerome and St. Augustine, and for denying the truth of what they have said." Bishop Peacock seems not to have defended himself either with skill or firmness. After repeated examinations he was condemned by the Primate on the 28th of November, who, after having reminded him of the dangers of an obstinate clinging to heresy, offered him his choice between a public abjuration of his errors and being delivered,

[12] He thus expresses himself (iii. 724). "This man, after he had received into his heart some sparks of the pure and sincere religion (albeit that he did not greatly attempt anything against the Bishops in this troublous time), foreseeing and providing for his own safeguard as much as he might, yet could he not so lurk, or lie hidden, but that at length he was perceived." The recent editor of Peacock's works remarks (Pref. p. xl.) that "Foxe's account is so vague and wanting in circumstantiality, that no great use can be made of it."

after degradation, to the secular arm, as food for the fire and fuel for the burning. "Choose, then, one of these two," said the Primate, "for the alternative is immediate in the coercion of heretics."

The Bishop of Chichester did not long hesitate in choosing the better part. Then and there, in proof of his change of heart, he retracted in general all the heretical positions which were contained in his various books, which he renewed with greater solemnity a few days afterwards at St. Paul's Cross in the presence of twenty thousand spectators. Arrayed in his episcopal vestments, he knelt at the feet of the Archbishop and the Bishops of London, Rochester and Durham, and made a recantation of several heretical articles. Then, with his own hands he delivered to the public executioner eleven of the volumes which he had written, which were by him cast into the flames which had been kindled for the purpose. As they blazed up before his eyes he exclaimed aloud, in the bitterness of his sorrow, "My pride and presumption have brought upon me these troubles and reproaches."

We will follow the Bishop to the end of his pilgrimage. After some delay, into the causes for which it is unnecessary to enquire, it was decided that the Abbey of Thorney, in Cambridgeshire, should be his final resting-place. The instructions sent the Abbot [13] for his safe custody ran in the following terms: [14] "He shall have a secret closed chamber, having a chimney and convenience, within the Abbey, where he may have the sight of some altar to

[13] The copies of this writ which have come down to us present several marked variations. I have here followed that which has been adopted in the edition of Peacock's writings published in the series of the Master of the Rolls, by the Rev. C. Babington, 1860.

[14] The Abbot at this time is said to have been William Ryall or Hall. See Dugd. *Monast.* ii. 596.

hear Mass; and that he pass not the said chamber. To have but one person, that is sad and well disposed, to make his bed and to make him fire, as shall be used. That he have no books to look on, but only a portuous,[15] a mass-book, a psalter, a legend, and a bible. That he have nothing to write with, nor stuff to write upon. That he have competent fuel according to his age, and as his necessity shall require. That he be served daily of meat and drink as a brother of the abbey is served when he is excused from the freytour,[16] and somewhat better after the first quarter, as his disposition and reasonable appetite shall desire, conveniently after the good discretion of the said Abbot." Forty pounds by the year were assigned to the abbey for his finding. His subsequent history and the period of his death are unknown.

The heretical opinions for holding which the Bishop of Chichester was condemned, are the following:[17]

That it is not of necessity to salvation to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ after death descended into Hell; or in the Holy Ghost; or in the Holy Catholic Church; or in the communion of saints; or that the Universal Church cannot err in matters of faith.

It is not necessary to salvation to believe and hold that whatever a General Council of the Universal Church appoints, approves, and determines in favour of the faith and for the salvation of souls, is to be approved and held by all the faithful of Christ; and that whatever it reproves and decides, or condemns as contrary to the Catholic faith as to good manners, is by the same to be believed and held as reprobate and condemned.

An ancient Register of the diocese of Salisbury having

[15] That is, a breviary.

[16] That is, excused from dining in the refectory or hall.

[17] The text as given by Foxe (iii. 733) varies considerably from that which here stands in the text.

found its way into the hands of Dr. Allix,[18] Treasurer of that Cathedral, he printed from it "the heresies, errors, singular opinions and false doctrines," for holding which certain individuals were found guilty in A.D. 1490. It may be remarked that the sympathies of the Huguenot Allix led him to call these men "pretended heretics," thereby showing that in his opinion they were not heretics in reality.

The first of these martyrs held that the Church of Christ is but a synagogue and a house of merchandise. That the Sacrament of the Altar is not the very Body of Christ, and that Priests may buy thirty such gods for one penny, and will not sell one of them but for two pence. That images of Saints be not to be worshipped. That Priests be the enemies of Christ. That St. Peter was never Priest but a little before his death, and that Simon Magus gave him his priesthood.

Henry Bennet, of Speen, held that only God is to be worshipped, and not the images of Saints. That he had not believed steadfastly in the Sacrament of the Altar.

William Brigger had erred and misbelieved in the Sacrament of the Altar, saying that It was not the very Body of Christ. He had spoken against the Sacrament of Penance, saying that it was enough to be shriven to God. He had spoken against the doctrine of Priests, affirming of them that all Priests teach a false and a blind way to bring us all into the mire.

Richard Hignell had held that the Sacrament in form of bread should not be very God, but that only Christ Himself in heaven is the Sacrament, and none other.

[18] *Remarks on the Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of the Albigenses*, p. 276, Oxford, 1821, 8vo. Allix boldly maintains that the faith of the Albigenses "was in most things the same with that which our Reformers taught in opposition to the Church of Rome." See his dedication to the Queen.

Two other persons held similar errors, all of which all of them renounced.

We now touch upon the reign of Henry the Eighth, during the earlier half of which our inquiry comes to a close. Luther began his public attack upon the Church in the year 1517, an event which throws into the shade every other act of hostility from whatever camp proceeding. But it may be well before concluding this portion of the subject, to cast a rapid glance over what yet remains unexplored of the scene of action, in order to ascertain something of the forces which were arraying themselves against the City of God.

During the earlier part of King Henry's reign the activity of the Lollards suffered no diminution. Bishop Fisher detected several heretics in his diocese of Rochester when he visited it in the year 1505. John Moress of that city held some opinions which seem to have been peculiar to himself. In his recantation [19] he says, "I have erroneously and openly spoken and said that as for Christ, when He suffered upon Good Friday upon the Cross, He died not in perfect charity, forasmuch as He redeemed not Lucifer as well as He did Adam and Eve. As for our Blessed Lady she is but a sack; and the Son of God desired the Father to come into middel herth [20] to take a sack upon his back."

About the year 1506 a large party of Lollards was detected at Amersham, where they were dispersed by the activity of the diocesan, the Bishop of Lincoln.[21] The Prior of St. Osith's, one George Laund, fell into heresy and was compelled to abjure.[22]

Next year, A.D. 1507, Richard Gavell of Westerham in his abjuration says, "When I was accursed by my Lord of Canterbury, and so openly by my curate de-

[19] MS. Bodl. Rawl. D. 376. fol. 206. from Fisher's *Register*.
[20] The earth, this present globe. [21] Foxe, iv. 123. [22] *Id.* 215.

nounced now of late in the church of Westerham, I said in the presence of divers persons; 'Sirs, though my Lord of Canterbury hath accursed me I trust yet I am not accursed of God; and therefore, Sirs, fear ye not to company, or eat or drink with me, for all that.'"[23]

William Moress of Snodland, who recanted at the same time, confesses that when he was demanded wherefore he received not at Easter the Sacrament of the Altar, said, "I could buy twenty-four as good as that for three pence."[24]

In the year 1511 Archbishop Warham thought it expedient to enquire into the ecclesiastical condition of the county of Kent, and the result of that enquiry has fortunately come down to us. It is in every sense a remarkable document, and is well worth a careful examination. The individuals by whom it was conducted were men of unimpeachable character, and they thoroughly understood the nature of the business in which they were employed. Their report is entered in the official register of the Archbishop, which is still preserved at Lambeth, where it is open to the inspection of any one who will take the trouble of examining it.

On the second of May the commission met at Knowle, and summoned before it certain individuals who were accused of heretical pravity. We will take the cases singly as they stand in the register, and record as briefly as possible the distinctive points of each.

Christopher Grevil confessed that he had believed and taught of the Sacraments of the church and of the articles of the faith otherwise than the holy church of Rome and the universal church of God teacheth: "first, that in the sacrament of the Altar is not the very Body of Christ, but material bread. Also, that the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation are not necessary nor profitable for man's soul. Also that confession of sins ought not to be

[23] *Id.* fol. 206. [24] *Id.* fol. 207.

made to a priest. Also, that there is no more power given by God to a priest than to a layman. Also, that the solemnization of matrimony is not necessary nor profitable for the weal of man's soul. Also, that the sacrament of extreme unction, called aneylyng, is not profitable nor necessary for man's soul. Also, that pilgrimages to holy and devout places be not profitable, neither meritorious to man's soul. Also, that images of saints be not to be worshipped, and that a man should pray to no saint but only to God. Also, that holy water and holy bread be not the better after the benediction made by the priest than it was before."

All these errors, heresies, false doctrines and damned opinions the said Christopher Grevill, forsook and utterly renounced.

The confessions of William Rich of Benynden and John Grevill the elder of the same place are expressed exactly in the same terms. They are followed by various others, men and women, who held some or other of these errors. They were absolved from the sentence of excommunication and restored to the communion of the faithful; were enjoined to confess to the priest, to receive the Eucharist, and (as part of their penance) to witness the burning of William Corder. But a sharper penance was frequently insisted upon, of which I give a few instances. The reconciled heretic was ordered to bear, for life, upon the left shoulder of his outer garment an embroidered representation of a faggot surrounded by flame. He was to appear in the market place of the city of Canterbury on the Saturday, and in the cathedral on the Sunday next after the sentence, carrying a faggot upon his shoulder during the time of sermon. The same penance was to be gone through on the following Sunday in his parish church, where he should present himself with bare head and feet.

It is remarkable that during this visitation in every

instance the accused party held an heretical opinion respecting the blessed Eucharist. A large proportion were women. All renounced their heresies and accepted the penance enjoined them.

John Buckhurst of Staplehurst, who was examined at Knowle on June 5, 1512, held nearly the same opinions, to which he added certain others. He affirmed that a priest had no more power than a layman to minister any sacrament of Holy Church. He maintained that Christ was not incarnate, nor born of our Lady the Virgin Mary, nor did He suffer His Passion for the redemption of man's soul, nor did He arise from death to life on the third day after His Passion. This heretic escaped with the easy penance of having to bear a faggot for three Sundays during High Mass in his parish church.

But with some of the others, whose cases were of a deeper character, the Archbishop dealt with greater severity. Thus Joanna Lowes was sentenced to be confined within the nunnery of Sheppey, there to lead a life of penance, and not to go beyond one mile from the building. And the same sentence of seclusion was pronounced upon three men, who were to be shut up in three several religious houses. Besides these, various lapsed heretics were handed over to the secular arm for condign punishment by the State.[25]

We are indebted to Foxe for the information which we possess as to an episcopal visitation of the diocese of Lincoln held in 1520 and 1521. It seems to have been conducted with some energy, and the results to which it led induces the belief that in it we find a specimen of the average condition of England generally. It is the record of a continued sucession of negatives, the expression of an universal unbelief. No Pope, no Eucharist, no Pur-

[25] These particulars are derived from Warham's Register, in the Archbishop's Library at Lambeth.

gatory, no pilgrimages, no priests, no confession, no absolution, no penance, no Lent. It may interest our readers if we throw together into this place a few of the miscellaneous illustrations which may here be gathered of the principles, actions, and temper of these latest of the Lollards.

We gather from the examination of one of these men that he had been in divers places and countries in England, and had instructed very many, as at Amersham, at London, at Billericay, at Chelmsford, at Stratford-Langthorn, at Uxbridge, at Burnham, at Henley-on-Thames, in Suffolk and Norfolk, at Newbury, and in divers places more. The same person testified that as he went westward he found a great company of well disposed persons, being of the same judgment touching the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper that he was of, and especially at Newbury, where was (as he confessed) a glorious and sweet society of faithful followers, who had continued the space of fifteen years together, till at last, by a certain lewd person, whom they trusted, they were betrayed; and then many of them, to the number of six or seven score, were abjured, and three or four of them burnt. From thence he came (as he confessed) to the forest of Windsor, where he, hearing of the brethren who were at Amersham, removed thither, where he found a godly and a great company, which had continued in that doctrine and teaching twenty-three years. And this congregation of Buckinghamshire even remained till the time of John Longland, Bishop of Lincoln.

This John Longland is described by Foxe as a fierce and cruel vexer of the poor faithful servants of Christ, who most violently constrained them to utter and confess, both themselves and whom else soever they knew; by reason whereof an incredible number of men, women, and maidens were brought forth to examination and straightly

handled, and such as were found in relapse were burned. From the documents which Foxe has copied from the registers of this Bishop, we have gathered the following particulars.

Among these examinations first comes out a terrible story which is said to have occurred in Essex. Two priests put a mouse into a pix along with a consecrated Host, "and the mouse did eat It. Afterwards the fact of these priests being known and brought to the Bishop, one of the priests was burned for the same."[26] Gladly would we believe that there is some misstatement or exaggeration here, but the event is recorded in a quiet commonplace sort of way, without any expression of horror; and it is by no means impossible that the atmosphere of infidelity in which these people habitually lived was so dense as to prevent them from recognizing the character of the abominable blasphemy which they had perpetrated.

Alice Collins was a famous woman among the Lollards, and had a good memory, and could recite much of the Scriptures and other good books. And therefore when any Conventicle of these men did meet at Burford, commonly she was sent for to recite unto them the declaration of the Ten Commandments and the Epistles of Peter and James.

Henry Philip, being examined and abjured by the Bishop, was compelled to disclose his own words spoken to Roger Dod, saying to him that he must light a candle before his "Block Almighty," he being then keeper of the rood-loft at Wycomb.

Mistress Cotismere said that when women go to offer to images of saints they did it to show their own gay gear; that images were but carpenter's chips, and that folks go on pilgrimage more for the green way than for any devotion.

[26] Foxe, iv. 229.

The Register of Bishop Fisher already quoted enables us to carry on our extracts to the beginning of the present established church of England, which accepted as its doctrines many of the propositions which till that time had been denounced as heretical.

In 1532, John Pylcher of Cuxton said, "I believe that my soul shall arise at the day of judgment; but so shall not my body and bones."

John Smith, parson of Ditton spoke thus; "A layman might as well hear my confession, as I, being a priest, might hear his;" and that he was not bound by the Scriptures to make confession.

And lastly, Peter Durr, the priest of Gravesend, affirmed that neither the archbishops nor the bishops have any authority for making laws; that the Lutherans were not heretics, and that his own prayer was as good as that of our Blessed Lady.

This list might be extended to a much greater length; but the specimens which have here been quoted are sufficient to show the nature of the information which is to be gathered from such sources of information as the episcopal registers. From them, and from the other documents which have passed in review before us, we have no great difficulty in ascertaining the leading characteristics of the movement. It was purely democratic. During a limited period certain of the nobles of the Court of Richard the Second had taken Wyclif under their protection, and by their influence he had been enabled during his lifetime to propagate his doctrines with greater success than if he had stood alone. But at his death all this changed, and henceforth the system which he had adopted, had matured and fostered, stood upon an independent basis. It had to push its own way among the people, unprotected by the patronage of the great, the wealthy, or the learned. No one personage of any weight

advocated its claims in the Court, in the Houses of Parliament, or in Convocation. We have seen enough of the machinery by which it did its work to feel convinced that it was animated by the spirit of the people, supported by their money, and kept alive by their determination. There seems to have been no one directing mind which had undertaken to regulate this democratic movement; no orders are issued from head-quarters, there is no organized system, and yet the work prospers. The Government looked upon it with suspicion, as the advocate of principles which were certainly questionable and might become dangerous. The Church viewed it with undisguised hostility, an hostility at which we feel no surprise and with which we cannot but express an entire sympathy. It was impossible that the two hostile bodies could approximate, much less could combine, and no attempt at any compromise seems even to have suggested itself on either side. Had the proposal been made by one, it certainly would have been rejected with scorn by the other. When Lollardism triumphed under Henry the Eighth, it offered nothing less than unlimited and undignified submission to the antagonist whom it had defeated and crippled.

With this series of sketches before us, we feel inclined to speculate upon one or two questions which have long exercised our curiosity, and to which the solution appears now to be somewhat easier than when we first entered upon the inquiry.

We begin at length to understand the cause of that startling rapidity with which Henry the Eighth was able to carry into execution his plans for the establishment of the Reformation. England was prepared for it, and had for long expected it. Cranmer offered scarcely any doctrine to his countrymen which was a novelty to them. They had long maligned the Holy See, they had long

renounced the doctrine of the Sacraments, the supremacy of the throne had long been familiar to them, and every other innovation as it followed was welcomed as an old familiar friend. For long, the eyes of the crown and the greater lay lords had been fixed upon the property of the religious houses. We wonder that the Reformation did not happen a century before the time when it really occurred. England seems to have been ripe for it, and (if it may be permitted us to speculate) we should probably have had it during the century previous to that in which it burst upon us but for the turmoils connected with the wars of York and Lancaster. When Henry proclaimed war against the Head of the Church, he must have had the conviction strong upon his soul that in the struggle upon which he was about to enter he would be supported by a very large body of his subjects by whom the announcement had long been anticipated.

Again, when we look at the creed invented by Wyclif and the Lollards, and the process by which it was handed from one generation to the other for a century and a half, I confess that the prospect is not one which affords me any satisfaction. I find it revolting and repulsive, never inviting, edifying, or consoling. I cannot help saying to myself that this is not the way which God employs to form a Church, and to make His eternal truth known to His children. Nothing could be more unreasonable in itself, nothing less acceptable to men and women who aim at a pure and holy life, than the principles and the practices of this great Lollard heresy. The principal agents employed in the movement, who were they? The originator of it is an ecclesiastic, who places himself in open defiance against all the constituted authorities of his Church; and who holds his position in that Church and claims its revenues, the more easily to overthrow its doctrine, its discipline, its morals, and its

ritual. He is succeeded by men of lax life, who have quitted their monastic habit and sacred profession to contract scandalous marriages; by priests who have broken their vow of celibacy and who have profited by their liberty so far as to become the advocates of "free love" and the enemies of marriage. If such were the men, what must the women have been? While I remark that these men have not the gift of continence, not even of purity, I am invited to believe that God has given to them greater lights than He generally vouchsafes to grant to His own chosen servants; and that they were invested with a commission to amend errors and to correct abuses which had escaped the vigilance of the Fathers of the Church. I am told that these men, in whom I see much that is foul and hateful, understand better than God's own canonised saints, in what consisted the sublimity of purity, the essence of religion, and the truth of the faith; and that they had from Him a direct authority to abrogate degrading superstitions, and to remove dangerous deceits. For it is obvious to all that the Reformation advocated by Wyclif and the Wyclifites after him, in attacking the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Real Presence, the doctrine of the sacraments, prayers for the dead, and the other doctrines of the Church, thereby attacked the teaching of the primitive Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, the pillar and the ground of the truth.

Once more; in passing in review before us the manifold heresies and errors which constitute the aggregate of this new creed, the nature of which we have been discussing, we find ourselves wondering as to their origin. Where did Wyclif get them? Are they to be found anywhere all lumped together, like a knot of vipers at the bottom of a dunghill? Or did he pick them up singly and separately, as he wandered through the forbidden

literature of schism and heresy, selecting each as it came in his way, and moulding each into his system? Or, lastly, did he invent them, accepting each as it was suggested to his own busy brain by the Father of Lies as a fitting weapon to be employed to overthrow the walls of the Jerusalem against which he had vowed such deadly hatred? It would not be easy to decide; but it would be curious to investigate the question.

And, lastly: one would like to know how much the heresies of the sixteenth century are indebted to the heresiach of the fourteenth. How much did Zuinglius appropriate to himself out of the hoard amassed by Wyclif? how much did Luther, how much Calvin, how much Jewel? And does there remain any residuum, anything unappropriated after the scramble? In connection with this I cannot but express my sympathy with Wyclif's admirers when I notice how poor is the homage with which the hero of their worship is greeted, as compared with that which always has been, always will be, lavished upon the names which have just been mentioned. As the subject presents itself in its broader features, I see no reason why the victory gained by the ecclesiastical rebellion of the sixteenth century should have been split up into sections and assigned to separate leaders. The name which best describes the whole is "Wyclifism." In order to understand its true character there is no need to travel to Zurich, to Wittemberg, or to Geneva. The origin of the mischief lies nearer, it is to be found at our own doors; it is of home growth. We have but to go to Lutterworth, and there we shall see the spot whence sprang those principles of evil, evil religious, evil political, and evil social, which ever since the days of John Wyclif have waged such an unceasing warfare against the sceptre of the prince, and the tiara of the Holy Father.

CHAPTER IX.

The source of Wyclif's heresies—The Albigenses and Waldenses—Early heresies in Oxford—York—Ireland—Cologne—Cambrai—Antwerp—Le Mans—Soissons—Paris—Brittany—Lyons—Italy—Languedoc.

I HAVE affirmed more than once during the course of these papers that Wyclif did not invent the religious system which passes under his name, and I here repeat the assertion in order to reply to the question which it naturally suggests. If he did not invent them, where did he find them? That he did not invent them is clear from the fact that many, or rather most of these opinions were known to be in existence long before he was born. His genius was destructive rather than creative, and nowhere is he more at home than when he is launching out his negatives. His heresies were no novelties; they were antiquated and condemned heresies, which it was the occupation of his life to disinter and to rescuscitate. Probably not one of them was absolutely new to the men who accepted them in the aggregate. But until Wyclif's day they were nothing better than incoherent opinions, held by the ignorant rather in ignorance than in malice, moulded into no consistent system and supported by no recognised authority. As such they were comparatively harmless. But when the Oxford Professor and the Rector of Lutterworth became united in one and the same individual, and that individual a heretic, the case was different and the danger became more imminent. A weight and an influence were given from that moment to any opinion which he might be pleased to sanction.

In this lay his power for evil. His position in the University and the Church were worth to him and his followers much more than his genius, or his learning, or his eloquence, in none of which qualities was he exceptionally superior to many of his contemporaries. His faculty then for evil consisted chiefly in this; that his position as Professor and parish priest enabled him to put into circulation an enormous amount of base coin, and to persuade his credulous followers that it was standard gold.

We shall experience no great difficulty in tracing to their source the various heresies which are so conspicuous in the writings of John Wyclif and his followers. The patriarchs of these heresies range themselves under two heads. We have but to turn to any one of the many books or pamphlets which profess to trace the pedigree of the doctrines which, having been furbished up anew, are enshrined in the Thirty-nine Articles, and there we shall be introduced to the Waldenses and Albigenses as "our Protestant Forefathers." Were they distinct, or were they identical? Who were these persons? Where did they live? What did they believe? To all these questions an answer may reasonably be expected.

The first question need not detain us long. The Albigenses were a distinct people from the Waldenses; they sprang from a different source, inhabited a different locality and held different opinions. But at the time of which we are writing these radical distinctions were frequently lost sight of; and the terms were frequently employed as if they were interchangeable with each other, and both meant one and the same nationality. A like confusion has been perpetuated by several modern writers, who employ them indiscriminately. It must be granted however that the Albigenses and Waldenses held certain opinions in common, and that they agreed in waging a

steady warfare against the Catholic Church. Each of them, whilst it preserved its own fundamental heresies, ingrafted upon them such others as it could most easily assimilate with itself, especially if they happened to be acceptable to the people; while other theories, which were not equally popular, were quietly permitted to fall into abeyance and be forgotten. Thus modified to a certain extent by local influences, and domesticated within definite geographical limits, the primitive heresy lost some of its earlier forms and was made to assume others better suited to the tastes of the new converts. Hence it came to pass that these novelties showed themselves on the continent of Europe under various names. In Germany the heretics were called Paterenes, in Italy they were Arnoldists, and elsewhere they were Henricians. The men who were styled Albigenses in one place or by one writer were known as Waldenses in another. Yet we are safe in asserting that among them all there was one common bond of union; all hated the Catholic Church, her creed, her clergy, her discipline, her ritual; all dissented from one or more of the truths which she taught, and all were pledged to work together for her destruction.

It is impossible to examine in detail the history of this anticatholic movement as it showed itself in every European state, but a few remarks upon the more important among these heresies will fall within the scope of our present enquiry. We shall deal with them as they were distributed over the continent of Europe; and disclaiming all intention of giving a full account of each, we shall endeavour to point out such of their peculiar features as may help to mark its connection with the Wyclifism of England.

Beginning then at home, we turn to the account which has come down to us respecting the Council which was

held at Oxford in the year 1160, in which were condemned the earliest heretics of whom we have any detailed account as having appeared in mediæval England. This account, unfortunately, is not so precise as could have been wished, for none of the original proceedings are extant; in dealing with their history we are compelled therefore to depend upon the statements of later writers. In the present instance our information is chiefly derived from the history of William of Newburgh, who is supposed to have written about the year 1197. He tells us that these foreigners, whom he calls Publicani, were about thirty in number, that they came into England with the avowed object of propagating their opinions, that they were Germans, that their leader's name was Gerard, and that they had been sent to Oxford by king Henry the Second, in order that their novel doctrine, which had excited suspicion from the beginning, might there be examined and its real character ascertained. When questioned about the articles of the faith which they professed, their true character forthwith manifested itself. Although they believed rightly as to the nature of the Godhead, yet as regards the Sacraments they held opinions which were distinctly erroneous. They denounced holy Baptism, the blessed Eucharist and marriage, and they made light of the doctrine of the unity of the Catholic Church. When pressed by testimonies from Holy Scripture they replied that they believed as they had been taught, and declined to engage in further discussion. Neither advice nor threats made any impression upon them. The assembled bishops had no alternative but to pronounce them heretics and to hand them over to the secular arm. By command of the Prince they were branded on the forehead and scourged out of the town. Their single convert, a woman, confessed her error and was reconciled to the Church.

Ralph of Coggeshall, a monastery in Essex, gives some

additional information to that which has been quoted above from the history of William of Newburgh. These persons hold, says he, that children ought not to be baptised until they have reached the years of discretion, that prayer ought not to be offered up for the dead, nor ought the suffrages of the saints to be desired. They condemned marriage; they refused to partake of milk in any form; they rejected all animal food; they did not hold the doctrine of Purgatory, but believed that immediately upon death the soul passes to eternal rest, or to damnation. They rejected the whole of the Sacred Scriptures excepting the Gospels and the Canonical Epistles.[1] It would seem that such was the severity with which these miserable enthusiasts were treated that the whole of their number perished.

The warning, terrible as it was, did not succeed in freeing England from the seeds of heresy. Towards the end of the twelfth century it showed itself within the diocese of York, the Archbishop of which, Geoffrey Plantagenet, was exhorted by Peter of Blois, archdeacon of Bath, to summon his clergy for the speedy extirpation of this latent danger, which had gained a footing in the northern province.[2]

Even Ireland, once the island of the Saints, was not free from the aggressions of the modern heretics. In 1334 the Archbishop of Cashel was enjoined by Pope John XXII., to publish the Bull addressed to him and the Archbishop of Dublin against certain self-constituted preachers, who under the habit of religious men propagated error in these localities. The visitation of his diocese by Richard, Bishop of Ossory in the following year, brought to light the wide extent and the true character

[1] See Concil. Coleti, xiii. 285; Wood, *Hist. Oxon.* A.D. 1161; Walden, i. 4. Rad. Coggesh. p. 125, ed. Lond. 1875; Brompton, ap. *Dec. Script.* p. 1150.

[2] Ep. cxiii. Migne, 207, 340.

of this most remarkable heresy. Some of its tenets were exceptionally repulsive. Its adherents taught that our Blessed Lord was not only a mere man, but that He was a sinful man, and that as such He was justly crucified for His sins. Others held that the Adorable Sacrifice of the Eucharist was not to be venerated; that men were not bound to obey the Papal decrees, that it was lawful to practise the rites and to consult the demons of the Gentiles and Pagans, and to despise the Sacraments of the Catholic Church. The Irish prelates seem upon the whole to have acted with decision in suppressing such doctrines; and as no further complaints appear against these heretics we may presume that they were either converted to the faith or expelled from the kingdom.[3]

Those unfortunate Germans, whose missionary zeal was thus dealt with so severely at Oxford, seem to have been an offshoot from a kindred body, generally known under the name of Cathari, who had made themselves notorious in the neighbourhood of Cologne about nearly the same time. Their proceedings are recorded in a work written by Eckbert,[4] abbot of Schonauge, in the diocese of Treves, and by him dedicated to Reginald, Archbishop of Cologne, in which diocese the Paulicians appear to have been very numerous and active. They are described by him as having been most hostile to the Catholic faith. They were familiar with the words of Holy Scripture, which they could quote with fluency in defence of their own errors and in abuse of the Catholic teaching. They were great talkers, and had always something bitter to say against the acknowledged doctrines of the Church. Eckbert suggested to the Archbishop that his work might become useful in furnishing arguments for future occasions when the Catholic party might happen to come into

[3] Theiner, *Vet. Monum. Hibern. et Scot.* pp. 261, 269, 299, Rom. 1864. fol.

[4] Migne, vol. cxcv. p. 11.

collision with these loquacious and aggressive heretics. He knew their doctrines well, having had discussions with them upon several occasions.

From the same treatise we learn that these heretics of Cologne were especially hostile to marriage. If any one remained until death in that estate, nothing short of eternal damnation awaited him. They never ate flesh, since it was the creation of the devil; a doctrine which marks their Manichæan origin. Concerning baptism their teaching varied, but the general doctrine which they held was that it profited nothing. They rejected Purgatory, maintaining that the soul at death passes at once, and finally, either into Heaven or Hell. Consequently they thought it vain to pray for the dead, or to offer Masses, or to give alms. In fact, they rejected the doctrine of the Mass altogether, although they did not refuse to hear it upon occasion, or even to communicate along with their Catholic neighbours at the altar; but this they did only to prevent their unbelief from being discovered. They said that there is no real priesthood in the Church of Rome, or indeed anywhere save in their own sect. They denied that the Body and Blood of our Lord could be consecrated, or received at a Catholic consecration. Their teaching was that our Lord had no actual birth, no real human flesh, and that His death and resurrection were only visionary, in appearance, and not in reality. Hence they did not celebrate the feast of Easter, or if they did so in order to escape danger they did it negligently and irreverently. Some of them held that human souls were no other than those apostate spirits who, for their rebellion, had been cast out of the kingdom of heaven at the beginning, and who might obtain salvation by good works wrought by them while in possession of such human bodies as they were permitted for a time to inhabit. The information thus given by

Eckbert is especially valuable, as it helps us to understand what were the doctrines which the heretics of Cologne wished to introduce into Oxford.

A Cistercian monk named Cæsarius, an inmate of the monastery of Heisterbach, near Bonn, in the diocese of Cologne, who wrote about the year 1220,[5] gives us some additional information respecting these heretics, some of whom frequented his own neighbourhood. Apparently they were of the same family as the unfortunate missionaries who had fared so badly at Oxford. He tells us that at Cologne, as elsewhere, they exhibited that intensity of hatred against the Adorable Eucharist which is such a marked token of the presence of the Evil Spirit. Upon several occasions they contrived to gain an entrance into some of the churches in the vicinity, from which they stole the Blessed Sacrament, which they afterwards desecrated by throwing It into the mud; a profanity which led to the passing of regulations for the more careful security of our Lord's Body in the Tabernacle under lock and key.[6] Respecting these same infidels he goes on to tell us that their leader at Cologne was a person called Arnold,[7] from whom apparently the sect of the Arnoldistæ was named. This individual having been examined by learned men was sentenced to death and led out to execution. Several of his followers were adjudged to suffer with him. In the midst of the flames this Arnold laid his hands upon the heads of his half consumed disciples, exhorted them to hold firm to their opinions, and promised them a share in the rewards of St. Laurence.[8]

[5] See Cave, *Hist. Lit.* ii. 290; Oudin, iii. 80.

[6] Cæsarius Heisterb. *Hist. Memorabilium*, ix. 52, p. 585. Ant. 1604. 8vo.

[7] These Arnoldistæ are named, along with many other heretics, in a Decretal Epistle of Pope Gregory the Ninth, A.D. 1236, Concil. vii. 163. ed. Hardouin.

[8] *Id.* v. 19, p. 286. For proofs of the frequency of heresy in this district see the same work, pp. 295, 297.

Long before the heretics of Cologne had invaded England, the spirit of bitter hostility to the Church for which they were so conspicuous had made itself a home in the northern parts of France. In the year 1025 the Archbishop of Cambrai discovered the existence of a school of Manichæan heretics in his city of Arras, where they had settled on their voluntary departure or enforced expulsion from Italy. On their arrival in his diocese the Archbishop had made some enquiry as to their orthodoxy, and had been induced to believe that they were a simple-minded and harmless community. This implied sanction of the diocesan gave them the opportunity of working much mischief in the neighbourhood, of which they were not slow to avail themselves. The suspicions of the clergy having at length become aroused, these new comers were arrested and subjected to an official examination. They stated that they followed the doctrine of an Italian named Gundulf, and they declined to admit any authority save his. They rejected the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, looked upon marriage with horror, denied the benefit of penance, and spoke contemptuously of the veneration of saints. The Archbishop of Cambrai used every effort to bring them to a right mind, and entered into a laboured argument in which he refuted their errors and vindicated the doctrines of the Church. The accused admitted that they had been in the wrong and recanted their heresies, after which they signed a confession of the orthodox faith. How far they were sincere is questionable, for it appears that they did not scruple, when necessity demanded, to shelter themselves under such a discreditable expedient as to play the hypocrite and to profess what they did not believe.[9]

We still linger in the north of Europe. Its ecclesiastical history shows us that during the middle ages

[9] Concil. ed. Coleti, xi. 1153; Hefele, vi. 260, § 533.

heresy had here struck its roots deep into the soil and was not easily eradicated, of which the exploits of Tanquelin furnish a sad illustration. A layman of this name preached the most monstrous errors in the neighbourhood of Utrecht, Antwerp and Cologne, about the beginning of the twelfth century. He taught that the Sacraments of the Catholic Church were of no value, that to receive the Body and Blood of Christ was a useless superstition, and that neither bishop nor priest could render any effectual service in the work of a man's salvation. From the Pope to the meanest clerk, all were worthless. The entire Church was centered in him and his followers. He announced that in him dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Although as is usual in such cases his life was marked by the most abominable immorality, yet the common people looked on and were not offended. They contributed liberally to his expenses, which were considerable. He was attended by about three thousand armed men, and his dress and mode of life were most extravagant. The clergy of Utrecht solicited the assistance of the Archbishop of Cologne in a letter from which the above information has been derived. St. Norbert, the founder of the Order of the Premonstratensians, went to grapple with the danger, and succeeded in winning back to the truth many persons who had been seduced by this heresy. Norbert's visit to Antwerp, which marks the date of this heresy, occurred in the year 1126.[10]

It became necessary that Hildebert, Bishop of Le Mans, should undertake a journey to Rome to consult the Pope upon a matter of importance. Shortly before he set out he was waited upon by two clerks, who

[10] The letter referred to in the text is printed by the Bollandists under 6 June, p. 845, with many illustrative remarks from other sources. See also the *Introductio ad Theologiam* of Peter Abelard, Migne, 178, col. 1056.

solicited permission for their master, whom they named Henry, to preach in the diocese during the Bishop's absence. Not only was this permission granted, but the unsuspecting prelate recommended his archdeacons to aid the preacher in his pious labours. No sooner had the Bishop taken his departure than the missioner arrived, and entered upon his labours with a zeal which speedily gained for him an attentive audience. All were charmed with him; with his appearance, with his eloquence, with his manners, with his doctrine; and all regarded him as a prophet sent from Heaven. The churches were too small to contain his admiring followers, and it soon became necessary to erect pulpits in the streets, from which the preacher announced his message with a vehemence which charmed and edified all who heard him.

Before long it was noticed that upon no subject did the orator declaim with greater zeal and frequency than upon the vices of the clergy. Better still, he announced that no tithes need be paid to such dumb dogs as these were. The subject was not disagreeable to the laity, and they adopted the views of the preacher with so much enthusiasm that they publicly insulted the ministers of religion whenever they ventured to show themselves in the streets. The armed protection of the magistrate became necessary to secure their houses from being pillaged and burnt, and the city seemed ready to break out into open insurrection. The chapter of Le Mans attempted to protect themselves by serving an interdict upon Henry, but he scornfully refused to receive it and continued his inflammatory addresses. They were conceived and expressed in a spirit and language which extinguished all sense of decency, and the laxity of the life of this prophet corresponded to his precepts. Although he was detected in a gross act of immorality upon Pentecost

Sunday he retained his influence over his besotted admirers. On the return of Hildebert from Rome he endeavoured to win the heretic from the grievous sins into which he had fallen and dragged so many others with him; but in vain. This "snare of the devil and celebrated squire of Antichrist," as the Bishop styles him, seems to have persevered in his iniquity to the last. He was expelled from the diocese of Le Mans, and there we lose sight of him. His attacks seem chiefly to have been directed against the doctrine of the Invocation of Saints,[11] but as one heresy generally leads to others, it is probable that his errors were more numerous.

At the same period another diocese of France was exposed to a trial of a somewhat similar character, the details of which are worthy of our attention inasmuch as they have been recorded by an eyewitness. John, count of Soissons, a man of evil life, permitted (perhaps encouraged) a sect of Manichees to settle and propagate their doctrines in the villages which were subject to his authority. Guibert abbot of Nogent, near Couci, has given us an account of the proceedings which were instituted against them. They taught that the Son of God, Incarnate for us, was only a phantom. That the baptism of infants has no effect. That the mystery of the Altar is a thing so abominable that the mouth of the priest may well be called the mouth of Hell. That marriage is to be condemned. The result of this teaching, as Guibert tells us, led to the most disgraceful immorality. The manners of the people became as abominable as their doctrines. They held their meetings by night in secret places, in which were enacted atrocities which cannot be

[11] See Hildebert's Epistles xxiii. and xxiv. (Migne, 171, 237, 242,) and the Life prefixed to that volume, col. 70. These events must have occurred in A.D. 1111 and 1112.

here recorded. A considerable number of them having been seized and thrown into prison, Guibert went to Beauvais to consult with the clergy there assembled as to the punishment which should be inflicted upon such evil doers. During his absence from home the people of Soissons, fearing that the ecclesiastical judges would deal too leniently with the heretics,[12] broke open the prison, and rendered further enquiry unnecessary by burning the accused.

The contagion of heresy had probably made its presence known in the French capital long before it had reached either Metz, Cologne, or Oxford. At the time when these events just narrated were occurring, a vast and organised system of infidelity had established itself in Paris (which was at that time regarded as the centre of learning and civilisation),[13] and was extending its ramifications over the whole of that kingdom. Cæsarius appears to have been well acquainted with the details of its movements. He gives us the names and precise designations of thirteen of its chief supporters, almost all of whom were at the same time students of theology and had attained some recognised standing in the University. He states distinctly that they held the doctrines and followed the rites of the Albigenses; and from the details which he gives us of their opinions and practices he seems to have been correct. They maintained that the Body of our Lord is no more in the bread on the altar after consecration than in any other bread, or in anything else; and that God had spoken as much in Ovid as in St. Augustine. They denied the resurrection

[12] Guibertus, *de Vita sua*, iii. 17. ap. Migne, 156, 951.

[13] In the estimate of Cæsarius, Paris was "the fountain of all learning and the well of the Divine Scriptures" (*Id.* v. 22, p. 291). The incidents narrated above as having occurred at Paris are detailed with considerable minuteness in the same chapter.

of the body, and affirmed that after death there was neither Paradise nor Hell. They made light of saints, images, and relics. The doctrines which they advocated respecting the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit enabled them to plunge into every kind of sensuality, which to them entailed, as they affirmed, no stain of sin. The Pope to them was Antichrist, and Rome was Babylon. The indiscreet zeal of one their number led to the discovery of the whole society, and measures were taken to arrest its members and to bring them to justice. An active search conducted during three months throughout the dioceses of Paris, Langres, Treves, and Sens,[14] showed how widely spread and how deeply rooted was the mischief. The parties thus implicated were cited to appear in Paris, where they were examined by a committee of bishops and theologians. Many of them boldy admitted that they held the opinions with which they were charged, and several of the others refused to deny them. They were sent to the stake outside Paris, and to the last gave no sign of repentance. Cæsarius thinks that the heresy was thus extirpated, but in this opinion he seems to have been too sanguine.

We should be glad could we now pass on our journey to Languedoc, the cradle of the heresy of the Albigenses, but we must ask permission to linger for a few moments on the road. Our first halt shall be at Orleans, in order to make ourselves acquainted with a remarkable occurrence which happened there as early as A.D. 1022. In that year it was found necessary that a Council should be

[14] Further information respecting this formidable conspiracy may be gathered from a notice of the Council held at Sens in A.D. 1198, for which see Coleti, xiii. 739, Hardouin, vi. 1947, and the letter of Pope Innocent the Third to Michael, the Archbishop of Sens, there printed. From these authorities we see that Cæsarius is far from having exaggerated the extent of the mischief.

there held for the purpose of dealing with certain heresies which had been imported thither by a woman who had come from Italy. Several priests had permitted themselves to be perverted by the errors thus introduced. The chief of them were the following: They denied that there was a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, and held that the world had no beginning. Moreover, that Jesus Christ was not born of the Virgin Mary; that He did not really suffer for mankind, nor did He die, nor did He rise from the dead; that remission of sins is not given by Baptism; that consecration by a priest does not make the Body and Blood of Christ; and that the invocation of saints is useless. An earnest effort was made to convince these clerics of their errors, but without effect. Thirteen of them were condemned, ten of them being canons of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, were deposed and burnt.[15]

No district of Europe, however remote and inaccessible, was free from the aggressions of this ubiquitous heresy. It might have been thought that Brittany, standing so far aloof from the rest of the civilized world, would have escaped; but it was not so. From reports which reached him as to the spiritual condition of the Breton Celts, the anxiety of the Sovereign Pontiff was excited on their behalf. In A.D. 1148, a Council was held at Rheims, which was numerously attended by the prelates of France, Spain, and Germany. Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, was present, and the meeting was presided over by Pope Eugenius himself. The rapid growth of error in various parts of France, more especially in Gascony and Brittany, occupied the earnest solicitude of the assembled clergy. Samson, Archbishop of Rouen, presented before the meeting a Breton gentleman named Eon de l'Estoile, whom he charged with having seduced many from the Catholic faith; and whose case he requested might be

[7] See *Concilia*, ed. Coleti, xi. 1115; Hardouin, vi. 829.

investigated. The Pope himself conducted the examination, which was speedily concluded. The eccentricity of manner and conversation exhibited by the accused showed that he was a maniac rather than a heretic, and as such he was consigned to prison. But madman as he undoubtedly was, he had contrived to shake the faith of very many among the simple inhabitants of Brittany and Normandy; and it became evident that an effort ought to be made to undo the mischief which unquestionably had resulted from his teaching.[8]

Watchful over the spiritual welfare of his children, Hugh of Amiens, Archbishop of Rouen, shortly after the Council had ended, spent some time in preaching to the Bretons. With the same object, at the request of Alberic bishop of Ostia, he composed a work in three books, in which he undertook to refute the heresies which had gained a footing among them. This work has come down to our times,[9] and is valuable as showing at once the nature of the errors which were then current, and the arguments by which they were supported. Many of the followers of Eon rejected infant Baptism, quoting the words of St. Mark: "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." From which they inferred that since infants cannot believe, Baptism to them is of no real value. Some among these men, however, seem to have admitted the necessity of that sacrament for adults, but refused as useless the sacrament of Confirmation, grounding their objection upon the words of St. Mark just quoted, which speak of Baptism as sufficient in itself, without any supplement. The Archbishop goes on to show that in the Catholic Church no one is permitted to abstain from receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, by means of which we are united with Himself; that by virtue of

[8] Coleti, xii. 1651.

[9] Migne, vol. 192, 1255, *Contra hæreticos sui temporis.*

the words of consecration the True Body and the True Blood of our Lord are given to us at the altar; that the same Body which is seated at the right hand of the Father is, in its perfect integrity, in the hand of the priest and in the mouth of the recipient; that it suffers no alteration, no diminution; and that it is serviceable to the living for the remission of their sins, and to the dead for the mitigation of their sufferings—truths which, in consequence of their rejection among the Bretons, it had become necessary to vindicate and establish. As far as can be judged from the manner in which the subject is discussed, it would appear that the sacrament of marriage was in no great estimation among the unbelievers, and was scarce regarded, indeed, as a sacrament at all. These heretical preachers were accompanied by women, who were neither their wives nor their relatives; with whom they had connected themselves, as they scandalously affirmed, following the authority and example of St. Paul. They looked with great contempt upon the vow of continence as made by monks, clerics, and religious women; and, in one word, rejected the theory of the Divine origin of the Church, which they seem to have regarded simply as a human institution.

In or about the year 1190, Bernard, the Abbot of Font-Cauld,[10] composed a treatise[11] upon the excesses of a certain sect of "new heretics called Waldenses." His zeal had been stimulated by the exhortations of Bernard, Archbishop of Narbonne, who after a careful inquiry into their tenets, had condemned them as erroneous and dangerous. They were treated with considerable forbearance; they were invited to a conference, they had the

[10] A monastery of Premonstratensians in Languedoc (Hérault) in the diocese of Saint-Pons.

[11] Bernardi, Abbatis Fontis Calidi, *adversus Waldensium sectam liber.* Galland, Bibl. Patr. xvi. 520; Migne, 204, 793.

opportunity of pleading their own cause, and when at last they were condemned, it was by the decision of the judge to whose appointment they themselves had consented. Bernard's treatise is a report of the proceedings of this conference, and is exceedingly curious, as containing a comprehensive view of such of the opinions as the party had at this time embraced.

It will suffice for our present purpose to notice the opinions advanced by the Waldenses upon this occasion, passing over the arguments by which they were assailed or defended by opponents or advocates.

The Catholics charged the Waldenses with the crime of disobedience and rebellion, inasmuch as they did not admit the authority of either Pope, Bishop, or Priest. In this new sect all were teachers and preachers, men, women, and children; and they were warned that by this insubordination they provoked the wrath of God. The Abbot is especially earnest against the indecency of women teaching and preaching in public; to the refutation of which novel abuse, by which he seems to have been much shocked, he devotes an entire chapter. Another of their heresies was that the dead were not benefited by the alms, or the prayers, or the Masses of the living. They held, or at least some of them held, that upon the death of the body the soul passes at once into either Heaven or Hell, and that there is no middle region called Purgatory; while others preferred to believe in the existence of some such place of incomplete joy or misery. They objected to the usual fabric of a Catholic church, simply as a building, and said that they would rather pray in a stable, or in a private room, or in bed. To them in fact, such a building as that used by Catholics for religious purposes was no church at all, nor was it worthy the name of a church.

It may be presumed that this enumeration of the

heresies of these Waldenses of Narbonne touches only such articles as were discussed upon the occasion referred to, leaving unnoticed various other points on which they were known to have erred from the Catholic faith.

Shortly after the Abbot Bernard's work was published, there appeared a treatise written by one Ermengaud,[20] an author about whom we know absolutely nothing. It is said to be written "against the heretics," but who they were, or where resident, we are not told. Clearly, however, they were Albigenses, for the dualism that they professed is everywhere conspicuous;[21] and we probably shall not be far wrong if we fix their locality as somewhere in the district of Languedoc. The opinions which they held are easily ascertained, for it is the usage of the author briefly to state, at the beginning of each chapter, the error which it is his intention to impugn, and then to proceed to its refutation.

Many of the errors held by these heretics have no immediate connection with the subject under our consideration, not having found their way into the system adopted by Wyclif; but there are others which have left distinct traces of their influence upon the opinions adopted either by him or his followers. Of these we may specify their disregard of the material fabric of the church and of the ornaments and decorations of the sacred building, all of which they rejected as things which contributed nothing to the salvation of souls. They also despised altars and the sacraments ministered at them, and found

[20] Ermengaudi, *Opusculum contra hæreticos*, pr. by Gretser, opp. xii. 223, and Migne, 204, 1235.

[21] We are told in the first chapter of the work that these heretics did not believe that the world was made by God, but was the work of the prince of the evil spirits. They held that Moses was a magician; they condemned marriage; they believed that Christ was not born of a woman, that He had no true body, that He did not really eat and drink, nor suffer, die and rise again.

fault with the singing there practised, possibly because it was too ornate. Regarding the Blessed Eucharist probably all of them held that no change took place in the elements by virtue of the words of consecration; while some of the party believed that by hearing the Word of God they ate the Flesh of the Son of Man and drank His Blood. Their errors in regard to Baptism were numerous. Some said that water-baptism, without the laying on of their hands, profited nothing to those who received it, whether they be children or adults. Others said that it did not benefit any one unless he desired it with his own mouth and his own heart, which led to the conclusion that the baptism of infants is unprofitable. There were some who taught that Baptism administered by a sinner was absolutely of no effect. Ermengaud then explains very fully the nature of the rite which they called "the consolation," in which these heretics placed their hope of salvation, since by means of it they obtained the remission of all their sins. We pass it over, however, since it seems never to have gained a footing in England. The treatise ends by showing that these Albigenses rejected the doctrine of prayers for the dead and the invocation of saints, whose intercession they held to be without any value either for the living or the dead.

Italy was not permitted to escape the general infection. We have already seen that when heresy was discovered in the city of Orleans its introduction was traced to an Italian woman; and Arras received from the Italian Gundulf the Manichæan doctrines which there produced such an abundant harvest.[22] During the pontificate of Innocent the Third, "the new Manichees," as they were there styled, overran the province of Orvieto, of which disaster a contemporaneous account has come

[22] See the present Work, Chapter ix.

down to us.[23] They had gained a footing there as early as 1125, which they seem to have retained for a century. Milan was one of the strongholds of the same sect. When Archbishop Galdinus took possession of his See there in 1167, he found more heretics in it than catholics.[24] We are able to ascertain the nature of the error of these Milanese heretics with considerable precision, as we fortunately possess a treatise written in 1163 by a certain Bonacursus, one of their number, who became a Catholic.[25] His information, which is very precise, leaves no doubt as to the fact of their Manichæan origin, since their dualistic principles are clearly perceptible throughout the entire treatise. They held that the Body of our Blessed Lord was not real, that He did not arise from the dead, nor ascend into heaven. With them the Son was not equal with the Father. Pope Sylvester was the Antichrist, in whose time the true Church had perished. They held, in short, all the blasphemous and abominable doctrines of the Manichees, which were afterwards reproduced among the Albigenses.

The whole subject of heresy in Italy has been examined so fully and so accurately in a work especially devoted to the subject that any further illustrations become unnecessary in this place.[26]

At last we find ourselves at the birth-place of the Waldenses, so called from Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons. He is described as a wealthy, but ignorant person. Being joined by a number of men and women as ignorant as himself, they ran from town to town and from village to village, scattering their errors far and wide. The Archbishop of Lyons endeavoured to bring

[23] *Acta Sanctorum*, 21 May, p. 86. [24] *Id.* 18 April, p. 594.

[25] *Migne*, 204, 775, where this work is ascribed to about the year 1190, whereas Cave refers it to 1163 (ii. 237.)

[26] See *Gli eretici d' Italia, di Cesare Cantù, Torino*, 1865, 8vo. 3 vols.

them to order, but they refused to listen to his injunctions, pleading in their justification the usual excuse, that it is better to obey God than man. The punishment of their disobedience speedily followed. A Council was held at Rome, under Pope Alexander the Third, which was attended by the Archbishop of Canterbury and five English bishops, besides very many others from various parts of the Catholic world. In it the heretics called Cathari, or Patarini, or Publicani, were excommunicated and driven into exile.[27] They found a welcome among the heretics of Lombardy, with whom they made common cause, and the two parties soon blended together and became identified. Their opinions have been already cited, and it is unnecessary to repeat them here.

It is clear from the above statement, which is that of a contemporary, that the founder of the Waldenses had no ordinary vocation, by virtue of which he was justified in taking upon himself to preach the Gospel. Yet not only did he preach, not being called thereto, but he preached in direct opposition to the Church, who therefore cast him out of her communion for his disobedience and rebellion. No other Church save that in union with the See of Rome was then in existence, consequently Waldo could have neither orders or jurisdiction from any authority whatever. If he had none himself he could give none to his successors. Hence, then, he was driven by the necessity of his position to make light of sacred orders; hence it comes that he and his followers have declared that lay men and women might preach and administer the sacraments. And as similar causes produce similar results, we can here trace to its origin the indifference with which the Reformers of all ages treat the separation which exists between themselves and the parent stem, from which they well know that they have cut themselves off by this act of deliberate schism.

[27] See Conc. Lat. iii. ap. Coleti, xiii. 430. can. 17.

The fertile and prosperous district which stretches from Lyons to the Gulf of Gascony was for many ages the head-quarters of the heresy of the Albigenses; a heresy which went beyond all its rivals, as well from the wide extent of country over which it had established its sway as from the strongly marked character of its doctrines and usages. When we attempt to investigate either the history of its opinions or of the people by whom they were professed, we are deterred by the abundance of the material which offers itself for our examination. The official proceedings of inquisitors, the acts of councils, letters, chronicles, poetry, biography, all invite our attention, and each would amply reward a careful study. But the limited space at our disposal forbids us to enter upon such a wide range of inquiry, and constrains us to select a very few only out of the abundant materials to which we have referred. These shall be two; one, a contemporary historian and an eye-witness, the other, a contemporary collection of official documents. We refer to Peter of Vaux-Sernai and the *Book of Sentences*, and we venture to assure our readers that, by aid of these two authorities, they can obtain a satisfactory insight into the opinions and usages of these celebrated heretics.

The monk Peter, an inmate of the Cistercian monastery of Vaux-Sernai, accompanied Simon de Montfort in the crusade which he undertook against the Albigenses, of which he has left us the fullest account which we possess.[28] The principal value of this narrative consists in the account which he has left us of the chief events of the war, a subject upon which we do not pretend to enter; but interspersed with the history of what he saw and heard, we find many interesting remarks upon the errors and heresies in Languedoc. The Albigenses held that

[28] This treatise is printed in Migne, *Patrolog. Lat.* 213, 541, but here I follow the edition which is given in Bouquet, *Hist. Franc.* xix. 5, seq.

there are two creators,—the benevolent God, Who created invisible things, all that is visible being the work of the malevolent God. The New Testament was by them attributed to the former of these beings, and the Old to the latter. They held that all the fathers of the Old Testament were damned, and that St. John Baptist was one of the greatest of demons. It is impossible to print in this place the blasphemous indecencies which they uttered about our Blessed Lord and Mary Magdalene, and on many other points to which it is unnecessary to allude.

As to the Church of Rome, they believed that almost all of it was a den of thieves, and they reduced the doctrine of the sacraments to all but a nullity. With them the water of Baptism differed nothing from common water, and they publicly taught that the Consecrated Host was simply ordinary bread. Confirmation and Confession they held to be empty frivolities. Holy Matrimony was to them a state of impurity, in which no one could be saved if the union happened to blessed with children. They held some marvellous theories about the resurrection of the body; for they said that the souls of human beings are really those of the angelic spirits who, having been cast down upon earth as the punishment of their pride, left for a time their glorified bodies in the air.[29] It was believed that these souls, after inhabiting seven terrestrial bodies in succession, it mattered not of what kind, and having thus fulfilled their penance, would at length return to the bodies which they had formerly occupied. The images which are commonly seen in

[29] Is there any connection between this idea and that of Margery Backster, one of the Norwich Lollards, who is reported to Foxe to have said that "the people did worship devils who fell from Heaven with Lucifer, which devils, in their fall to the earth, entered into the images which stand in the churches, and have long lurked and dwelt in them; so that the people worshipping those images commit idolatry?" Foxe, iii. 596.

churches were by them called idols, and the bells were to them the devil's trumpets. The process of reception into their sect was as follows. When a Catholic wished to join them, he who received him said, "Friend, if you wish to be one of us, it is necessary for you to renounce the entire faith which is held by the Church of Rome." The other must then reply, "I renounce." The heretic replied, "Then receive the Holy Spirit from the good men," and he breathed seven times into his face, and continued, "You must now renounce the cross which the priest made on you in Baptism, on your breast, on your shoulders, and on your head, with oil and chrism." The applicant replied, "I renounce it." "Do you believe that that water could work salvation for you?" He answered, "I do not believe it." "You must renounce that veil which the priest placed upon your head when you were baptised." The answer is, "I do renounce it." Thus he secures the baptism of the heretics, and rejects that of the Church. Then all of them place their hands upon his head and kiss him, and clothe him with a black garment, and from that hour he is one of themselves.

There were certain degrees or classes among the Albigenses, the more advanced being called the Perfect; while such as lived according to the ordinary ways of the world were simply known as Believers. All of them, however, held the same opinions. Even the Believers were addicted to usury, robbery, homicide, fleshly lusts, perjury, and every kind of vice. They sinned, in fact, with more security and less restraint, because they believed that they would be saved without making any restitution, without confession or absolution, provided that when they were at the point of death they would say one *Pater Noster*, and receive the imposition of hands from their masters.

It appears from Peter of Vaux-Sernai that these Albigenses had among them a body of men whom they called

bishops and priests. He draws a comparison between the heretics of Albi and those of Lyons, whom he calls Waldenses. Of the two the former were much the more dangerous, as we shall have the opportunity of judging for ourselves when we examine the document which is generally known as the *Book of Sentences*. This however must be done in another chapter.

CHAPTER X.

"*The Book of Sentences*," its history—Abstract of its contents—Examination of certain heretics—Albigenses—Waldenses and others—Summary of results—Conclusion.

THE "*Book of Sentences of the Inquisition of Toulouse*," is an authority of primary importance in the examination of every question connected with the history of the Albigenses, and it has excited too much attention from their accusers and apologists alike to be here dismissed with only a passing notice. We shall consider it therefore in some detail. But before proceeding further, a few introductory remarks seem necessary in order to explain its composition and its origin, and to show how a document of such a private and official character made its way from Toulouse to London and at last found a home in our great national library of the British Museum.

In the year 1692, a merchant of Rotterdam (apparently an Englishman) of the name of Benjamin Furley had in his possession an ancient manuscript written upon vellum, which contained the official record of the proceedings of the Inquisitors of Toulouse for a period of sixteen years, namely from A.D. 1307 to 1323. During that period about 932[1] charges of heresy were examined by this tribunal. Such a court had long been in existence, yet the evils

[1] This calculation (which I have not attempted to verify) is given upon the authority of "Facts and Documents illustrative of the History, Doctrines and Rites of the ancient Albigenses and Waldenses, by the Rev. S. R. Maitland," Lond., 1832, 8vo, a work from which I have derived much valuable information.

which it was appointed to eradicate were still in active operation in Languedoc, and the Inquisitors still found abundant occupation. The frequency with which such cases were brought before them, the care with which they were examined and the facts elicited during the process make such a record as that of which we are speaking a document of the highest historical value.

A Dutch theologian of the name of Limborch[2] having obtained a loan of this manuscript published it in the year 1692, and did his work with praiseworthy fidelity. On the death of Benjamin Furley, the volume descended to his son John, and from him to Thomas. In the year 1754 this John offered it for sale to Thomas Secker,[3] at that time bishop of Oxford, at the price of £100. As the bishop seemed to hesitate about the price, Furley reminded him that "there is some hazard that the volume may one day or other fall into the hands of the Papists." The requisite sum was at length raised by subscription, and in the month of April 1755 the "*Book of Sentences*" was secured for the public and placed in the Library of the British Museum.

Such then is the modern history of the volume to which I now invite the attention of the reader. It is a document of which it would not be easy to overrate the importance, for it contains the fullest, the most interesting and the most conclusive evidence respecting the Albigenses which has yet been published.[4] Although we do not know how

[2] Philip van Limborch, a Dutch Arminian, was born at Amsterdam in 1633 and died there in 1712. He was one of Locke's correspondents, who addressed to him his celebrated letters upon Toleration.

[3] Secker became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1758 and died in 1768. The letters which passed between him and Furley as to the sale of the book are now inserted in it. It now forms number 4697 among the Additional Manuscripts.

[4] A large body of valuable material of a similar nature seems to exist in the Doat collection of MSS. in the National Library at Paris, C. Schmidt,

it passed from the Archives of the Inquisitors of Toulouse into the hands of an English merchant at Antwerp, yet the genuineness of the book is unquestionable and has never been questioned. In addition to the legal proceedings which are herein recorded, to chronicle which was its special object, this record supplies notices of the penances which were enforced or remitted; of the persons of both sexes and all ranks who were accused, examined, punished or discharged; and of such culprits as were handed over to the civil power. Interspersed with these strictly official entries occurs a large amount of miscellaneous information, frequently of considerable interest and value, for which it would be vain to search elsewhere.

During the sixteen years of which the proceedings are recorded in this volume fifteen meetings for official business were held by the Papal Commissioners. Of these nine took place at Toulouse, two at Carcassonne, three at Pamiers and one at Cordua.[5] They were conducted with great solemnity, and according to a strictly defined course of proceedure. The report upon the cases here entered is framed in conformity with the rules laid down by the Council of Narbonne in 1235, which provide that in every case a public instrument shall be drawn up which shall specify the offence with which the person accused is

in his *Histoire et Doctrine de la secte des Cathares ou Albigeois*, Paris, 1848, 8vo, quotes several volumes in this series, which may be arranged as under:

Relative to the Inquisition at Albi, MSS. Doat, 34, 55, 106.

" " Bézières, *Id.* 75.

" " Carcassonne, *Id.* 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 75.

" " Narbonne, *Id.* 52.

" " Toulouse, *Id.* 25, 28, 34, 35, 72, 74, 75.

See also an important paper on *Les sources de l'histoire de l'Inquisition dans le Midi de la France aux xiii et xiv Siècles, par M. l'Abbé C. Douais* in the *Revue des Questions Historiques*, Paris, 1881.

[5] In the diocese of Albi, see the *Book of Sentences*, p. 148.

charged.[6] Nine years afterwards a Provincial Synod held at Beziers further declared that the confessions and depositions of all persons brought before the court should faithfully be reduced to writing by some person under oath and specially deputed for the purpose, and it further provided that these documents should be preserved among the Acts of the Inquisition.[7] The volume printed by Limborch is evidently one of this series; and it seems to have been drawn up in strict obedience to the above wise regulations.

Such then are the materials at our disposal. It is not easy to decide as to the best way of dealing with them. The most satisfactory plan doubtless would be to gather from Limborch's volume the information which it contains as to the doctrines, usages and opinions expressed by such of the Albigenses as came under the jurisdiction of the court of Toulouse; and then having arranged them in due order, to compare them with what we know of the teaching of Wyclif and his followers. But this process labours under the fatal disadvantage of demanding more space and more time than are at my disposal. No better alternative suggests itself than to lay before the reader some of the most instructive portions of the cases here recorded. And this I now proceed to do in the following pages.

Peter Raymund de Hugonibus of Toulouse was accused before the Inquisitors of that city of being a lapsed heretic, and the truth of the charge was satisfactorily proved against him. His dealings with the Albigenses seem to have begun before 1300, and were continued with partial intervals until he was handed over to the secular arm in 1313. The sentence of condemnation then pronounced by the court, states that he had pertinaciously

[6] Concil. Narbon. cap. vi. ap. Coleti, Conc. xix. 1829. Maitland, p. 197 502. [7] Concil. Biterr. cap. iv. Coleti, xiv. 100.

asserted before the judges that he believed and held the following "horrible errors."

1. That carnal matrimony between a man and a woman is not true matrimony, nor is it good or lawful, not did God appoint it. He affirmed that there was another spiritual matrimony, as he had learned from the heretics.

2. That baptism done in material water, as the Roman church does, and holds, and teaches, is worth nothing whatever.

3. That in the Sacrament of the Altar is not the true Body of Christ, but only simple bread.

4. That there will not be a resurrection of human bodies; nor in the judgment will any one rise with his visible and material body.

5. That the benevolent God made all invisible and incorruptible things; and that an evil ruler (namely Lucifer) made all visible and corruptible things, and even human bodies.

6. That confession made to the Priests of the Church of Rome and absolution given by the same to those who confess, are of no value whatever.

7. That every oath, whether for the true or the false, is a sin and unlawful. It was further urged against him that he himself "having been frequently required to swear judicially, had refused, and still pertinaciously refused to swear."

8. That the sign of the Holy Cross is of no avail, nor would he sign himself "with the same sign, but altogether objected and refused to do so."

9. The sentence proceeds thus,—"You say and assert that the late Peter Anterii, a public heretic condemned by the judgment of the Church, and by the secular court given over to the fire and burnt, and all others his companions holding the sect and faith of the said Peter the heretic, are good men and good Christians, and have a

good faith and a good sect, in which you say that you wish to live and die; but you say and assert that all others who do not hold the faith of the said Peter Anterii, but who hold the faith of the Roman Church, do not hold the way of salvation and safety; and you say you believe that the said Peter Anterii the heretic was saved."

10. That he denied the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, and said that it avails nothing to salvation.

11. That, impiously blaspheming the Sacrament of the Incarnation of the Son of God, he asserted that God never entered into the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and that the man who keeps the commandments of God the Father is the only one who is the mother, brother and sister of God.[8]

The remaining articles are unimportant for our present purpose. This culprit was evidently one of the Albigensian heretics, and the errors peculiar to that sect are furthur illustrated by the sentence pronounced upon him, as will appear by the following extract. "You maintain," says this document, "that there are two Gods and Lords, one who is benevolent, the other who is malignant. You affirm that the creation of all things visible and corporeal was not the work of God the heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, but of the devil and Satan, the evil God, whom you call the God of this world, the maker and the prince of this world."

2. "You also make two churches, the one benign, which you say is your Sect and the Church of Jesus Christ, and that your's has the faith in which every one, and without which no one, comes to salvation. The other Church is the malignant Roman Church, which you shamelessly call the mother of fornications, the church of the devil and the synagogue of Satan, but which of a truth is the mother and mistress of all the faithful; all the de-

[8] Limborch, p. 68. Maitland, 314.

crees and orders and ordinances and statutes of which you impudently deprave by your falsehoods. On the other hand all those persons who hold its faith you call heretics and wanderers; and you teach, wickedly and impiously, that none can be saved in the faith of the Roman Church."

3. He was charged with having asserted, and in detail, that all the Sacraments of the Church of Rome,—namely, the Eucharist, in which is the true and lifegiving Body of Christ; Baptism which is done with material water; Confirmation, Orders, and Extreme Unction, were empty and vain. That the Sacrament of carnal Matrimony was always sinful, and that it cannot exist without sin, and that it cannot have been instituted by the Good God. The Inquisitors then proceed:—"The Incarnation also of our Lord Jesus Christ of Mary ever Virgin, which outwardly you fantastically profess, you do, as to the truth of the thing, blaspheme with your impious lips, since you deny that He assumed a true human Body and the true flesh of a man of our nature; and you assert and falsely state that in it He did not truly arise and accomplish the other works of our salvation, but in appearance only; nor did He ascend therewith to the right Hand of the Father. Also, that the Holy Mary, Mother of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not and was not a woman in the flesh; but dogmatising in darkness you falsely pretend, through the impiety and vanity of your intellect, that here is understood your church and that of your sect, which you say is true Penance, and that this is the Virgin Mary."

4. That the confession of sins made to Priests of the Church of Rome is worthless, and that neither the Pope nor any one of the Church of Rome can absolve any one from his sins; but that he and his followers had the power of absolving from all sins such persons as enter into his sect by the imposition of hands.

5. That he also entirely denied the resurrection of the body, "fancying some spiritual bodies and some inward man." Dated 9th April, 1310.[9]

Apparently this Petrus Anterii (who seems to have been the most active emissary of the Albigensian heresy), refusing to renounce his errors, was burnt at Toulouse in 1311.

Much to the same effect was the judgment pronounced upon Benedict Molinerii, deceased, who had died in the profession of the following heresies.

1. That "the church of the malignants," namely, the Church of Rome, punished these Albigenses unjustly.

2. That they did right when they fasted three days in the week upon bread and water.

3. That they did well in condemning matrimony, which they said was always a sin.

4. Also in condemning the Sacrament of the Altar, affirming that nothing was there but mere bread.

5. Also in condemning the Baptism of Water, saying that by the imposition of hands, done by them upon such persons as believed in them, a man would be saved, and that all his sins would be remitted without confession and satisfaction.

6. That it was impossible for God to have been incarnate, for never would He have humbled Himself so far as to enter the womb of a woman.

7. That there were two Gods, a good and a spiteful one, and that the latter created all visible things.

8. That they denied the resurrection of the body.

9. That souls were nothing else than those spirits which fell from heaven by reason of their sins.

These and many other things he had heard from the heretics when they preached.[10]

It is time that we should proceed to examine what

[9] Limborch, 82. Maitland, 271. [10] Limborch, 249.

were the tenets of the Waldenses, as distinguished from their neighbours the Albigenses, and to do this I shall continue to place before the reader some extracts from their examinations before the Inquisitors of Toulouse.

John Chaouat was accused of being of the sect called Valdenses, or Poor Men of Lyons. His examination and sentence show that the Waldenses held the following errors.[11]

1. That he is not subject to our lord the Pope, nor to the Roman Pontiff, nor to the Prelates of the Church of Rome.

2. That he cannot be excommunicated by the Roman Pontiff and Prelates. That he need not obey the Pope if he order the followers of this sect to desert and abjure it, although it be condemned as heretical by the Church of Rome.

3. That every oath without exception is forbidden by God and unlawful, and is a sin, in support of which he quoted the Gospel and the words of St. James.

4. That all judgment is forbidden by God, and consequently that it is a sin if any judge in any case adjudge any man to bodily punishment, or to the punishment of blood, or to death.

5. That he and his sect have power from God, as all the Apostles had, of hearing the confessions of the sins of all such persons as are willing to confess to them, of absolving them and of enjoining penances, although they are not clerks nor priests ordained by any bishop of the Roman Church, but simply are laics, and confess that they have no such power from the Church of Rome, but rather deny it.

6. That they make a jest of the Indulgences granted by the Prelates of the Church, and say that they are invalid.

7. That after this life there is no Purgatory for souls;

[11] Limborch, 262. Maitland, 331.

and consequently that prayers, and alms, and the celebration of Masses and the other suffrages of piety which are made by the faithful for the deceased, profit them nothing.[12]

8. That the prelates of the Church of Rome are blind, and leaders of the blind, and do not keep the truth of the Gospel nor follow Apostolical poverty.

9. That the Church of Rome is the Church of falsehood, and that they themselves preserve evangelical and apostolical poverty.

For holding these and other heretical opinions the same John, being a relapsed heretic, was handed over to the secular authorities.

The last class of those who were brought before the Inquisitors were certain heretics who are introduced by the name of Beguines, under which designation they had been condemned in the General Council held at Vienne in 1311-12. They were really friars of the Order of St. Francis, who, starting from the question of the poverty of our Blessed Lord had permitted themselves to be led into the heresies which formed the subject of the inquiry recorded in the Register. It will suffice to specify some of the chief of their opinions.

Matthew Terreni, of the Third Order of St. Francis, maintained the seven Articles for which four Beguines had recently been burnt as heretics at Marseilles. He held that the present Pope, John XXII., was the forerunner of Antichrist as St. John the Baptist had been the forerunner of Christ.[13] That in A.D. 1325 the great Antichrist

[12] Bernard abbot of Fontcaud, who wrote about the year 1200, tells us that the Waldenses held that when the soul is freed from the body it forthwith ascends to heaven or descends for its punishment into hell; and that they denied the existence of Purgatory. See his treatise in Migne, 204, 833.

[13] They also held that as a result of having condemned the Beguines, who had been executed for their opinions, the Pope had lost the power

would appear in Jerusalem. That all who believed as he did were in a state of salvation, and all others who disagreed were in a state of damnation, outside the Church, and filled with Antichrist.

Peter Tort, among his other objectionable doctrines respecting the papacy, maintained that the Church of Rome was that *meretrix magna*, of the Apocalypse, who held in her hand a golden chalice filled with abominations and was drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus Christ.[14]

From the doctrines of the Albigenses and other heretics the transition is natural to the consideration of their peculiar rites or religious usages.

One of the most important of these was the formula by which converts were admitted into their society, a step which was absolutely necessary to obtain life eternal. This rite, which was named the *Consolamentum* (or the Comforting) was intended to correspond with the Sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic Church. It was so styled because it brought the soul of the recipient into union with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, restored to it the original purity which it had lost, and delivered it from the empire which (according to the dualism of the Albigenses) the Malignant Spirit would claim over it. The person so received now became one of the *Credentes*, or Believers, and his "heretication" in due time was considered a necessary consequence. So firm was their conviction in the necessity of this rite that we find it recorded that an heretical teacher was brought by the parents to administer it to their dying child of two years of age.[15]

which had belonged to him as Pope, and that bishops made by him are no bishops, nor are they to be obeyed. Also, that in like manner such bishops as had consented to the execution of these persons had lost their episcopal power and could not administer the sacraments. Limborch, 315, 316.

[14] See Limborch, pp. 298, 320, 322, 323, 387, 388.

[15] Limborch, 190.

Connected with the *Consolamentum* was another rite, to which frequent reference is made in Limborch's volume. It was called *La Convenenza*, or the Compact, a term which requires some explanation. By it the person who was received into the sect of the Albigenses pledged his word to the minister that at the approach of death he would be fully "hereticated," and then discharge all the duties and obligations which were implied by that act of heretication. These obligations were many and severe, and to escape from their immediate pressure a compromise was accepted by which they were postponed until death seemed inevitable.[16] So complete was the purification effected by this reception that henceforth it became unlawful for the sick person to touch a woman, or to be touched by her, or to swallow the slightest particle of animal food, or milk, or eggs, or aught which had been created by the Malign Spirit.

But since it was possible that the supposed moribund who had received the *Consolamentum* might recover and would refuse to be bound by rules so cruel, every precaution was taken to delay the rite until all hope of recovery had vanished. Thus it is reported that Peter Saverii having been summoned to hereticate a sick woman, refused to do so, because there was the possibility of her recovery.

It happened however, and not unfrequently, that contrary to all expectation, the sick person recovered so far as to demand food. What was to be done under such circumstances? The invalid was questioned whether he would die as a martyr or a confessor. If he preferred the former alternative he was strangled; if he wished to die

[16] Thus, Peter Sanctii having pressed a sick man to enter into the *endura*, and so make a good end, the invalid refused to make any other agreement than that when he should be at the point of death he would enter into the sect. Limborch, 138.

as a simple confessor, the result was attained by starvation, sometimes voluntary, sometimes enforced.[17] Poison was also resorted to, and other means equally criminal. So far from being regarded as a crime the act was considered to be highly commendable, and the honour of the sect was involved in its execution.

The reader cannot be expected to accept assertions so startling merely upon the bare statement of a modern writer. The following extracts are submitted in proof of the charges advanced in the previous section, to which others might be added without difficulty, and to me they seem to be so plain as to need no further illustration.

Alazayt de Fays had a child who was ill. The child's grandmother induced the mother to have the boy received into the sect, and the heretic Peter Anterii was brought for the purpose. He charged the mother before the ceremony had been performed to give him no flesh meat, nor cheese, nor eggs, nor anything in which was animal fat, and with that understanding the child was hereticated, after which he survived three or four days. He was two years old.[18]

Peter Sancii hereticated a little girl who was sick, and having done so ordered that no milk was to be given to her from that time. The child, apparently an unweaned infant, died.[19]

[17] The following passage occurs in Gretser's edition of Reinerius Saccho (A.D. 1254) whence it is translated by Maitland, p. 434, who however questions whether it is the work of that author. "When they wish to receive any one who is at the point of death, they give him his option whether he will be in the kingdom of heaven with those Saints who are Martyrs or with those who are Confessors. If he prefer the state of Martyrs they shut the door and then strangle him with a cloth appointed for that use. If he chooses that of Confessors, then, after the imposition of hands they give him nothing to eat, nor [anything but] pure water to drink, and so destroy him with hunger." The original Latin is given in the same volume at p. 538.

[18] Limborch, 190.

[19] *Id.* 104.

I here give the translation of one of the Articles brought against Peter Raymundi. "You yourself voluntarily take away your own bodily life and inflict death upon yourself, because you have put yourself into that abstinence which the heretics call *endura;* in which *endura* you have already remained six days without meat and drink, nor would you eat, nor will you now, although you have been many times invited; and thus you hasten to eternal death with the damned." [20]

Sometimes however nature held out too long, and death was accelerated by more active agents than hunger.

The confession of Raymunda Serdoni contains the following statement. "Also she carried wild cucumbers to a certain person to be given to a sick woman, that is, Gulielma the wife of Martin de Proaudo, that she might die the more speedily. Raymunda, who gave her the cucumbers, said that the other woman had been received by the heretics and had put herself in *endura*." [21]

The same Gulielma de Proaudo "placed herself in *endura* that she might die in it, and bathed herself, and in the said bath caused herself to be bled. And the said Alasaytz (the deponent) brought the barber surgeon to her, and after the departure of the barber surgeon the said Gulielma untied her arm in the bath that the blood might flow out, and so she might be weakened and the sooner die, because she feared being taken by the Inquisitors. And she knew and heard that the said Gulielma, after the bathing and bleeding, placed herself upon the cold ground. Also, she twice asked the said Alasaytz to buy her some poison that she might hasten her death thereby, but she did not buy it for her. And then the said Gulielma declared and revealed to the said Alasaytz that she was received to the sect and order of the heretics, and *vestita* by the said Peter the heretic who

[20] Limborch, 179. Maitland, 321. [21] Limborch, 94.

had received her, and directed that Esclaramunda should wait upon her, and keep her in *endura*; and for this purpose she had sent to her from Rabestans, and she saw the said Esclaramunda waiting upon the said Gulielma.

"And then one day she saw a drink which Esclaramunda was holding in a cup, in which there was broken glass, and this she wished to give to Gulielma that she might die.

"Also, a woman told her from the said Esclaramunda that she must buy a cobbler's awl, wherewith to kill Gulielma, who desired it. But she would not buy it, but that woman bought it and shewed it to her; then she and the woman who had bought the awl went to Gulielma, who, in their presence and hearing, asked this Esclaramunda to stab her with the awl, in that part of her side where the heart was. And there was a discussion among them as to the place where the heart lay, and they were of opinion that it must be on the left side; but they did not then do what they had intended. She also saw that Esclaramunda gave Gulielma drink in a cup, in which she had put something black, and she believes it was some poison, because she had before said that she had some. And in the following day Gulielma died. And she heard from a certain girl whom she names that Gulielma was placed in a bath that night, and Esclaramunda gave her the juice of wild cucumbers." [22]

[22] Limborch, 70, Maitland, 284. The examination of this Esclaramunda contains a confirmation of several points in the above confession. She was aware, she said, that Gulielma put herself in *endura* and was hereticated, upon whom she (the deponent) waited in her last illness. Gulielma besought her and some other persons that her death might be hastened, fearing to be taken by the Inquisitors for heresy. The deponent gave to Gulielma a deadly poison to drink, of the juice of wild cucumbers, with broken glass, and saw an iron instrument, called *alzena*, which Gulielma had caused to be bought, that she might therewith be suddenly stabbed in the side, if the messengers of the Inquisitors should come. Limborch, 76. Maitland, 285.

Here then we see in detail in its full operation the system by which the heretic met the approach of death. He had abandoned the Church, abjured its faith, renounced its clergy, and scorned its Sacraments, and now his last act was the deliberate commission of the crime of murder. In theory, suicide was not only permitted but recommended; and in fact it seems to have been widely practised. Deaths by starvation, by poison, by the swallowing of powdered glass, by opening a vein in the hot bath are mentioned as by no means uncommon, and would seem to have excited neither surprise,horror, nor remorse. The subject is a curious one and might be pursued still further, were it necessary. But we must here close our extracts from Limborch, to whom our best thanks are due for the curious and instructive details which he has placed at our disposal. This Register of the Inquisition of Toulouse settles for ever the question as to the heresy, the blasphemy, and the immorality which prevailed among the Albigenses, and which ultimately drew down upon them the persecution to which they we subjected.

It is impossible to close the present inquiry without touching upon this sad phase of the subject. Let it not be supposed that I am indifferent to the sufferings to which these unhappy heretics were exposed, when I remark that to a great extent they drew these sufferings upon themselves. They propagated opinions and practised rites which were inconsistent with the decencies of Christianity and civilised life. They taught that marriage was a crime, that all external worship was an abuse which should not be tolerated, that the clergy were wolves who ought to be hunted out and destroyed, that property was robbery;—such opinions as these were inconsistent with the safety of society. Was the clergy bound to allow such theories to pass unchallenged? Sixty years before the Crusade against the Albigenses began, Peter the

Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, reported to the bishops of Ambrun, Die and Gap, what he himself had seen and heard during a recent visit which he had paid to the district overrun by these early heretics. No corner was free from them. They rebaptised the Catholic population, they profaned the churches, overthrew the altars, burnt the crosses, scourged the priests, threw the monks into prison, and compelled them to marry wives. This state of affairs had been going on for twenty years.[23] Such was the state of affairs in A.D. 1147, and thirty years later there was not much improvement. The General Council of Lateran, which met in 1179, speaks of them as men who respected neither churches nor monasteries, widows nor orphans, age nor sex, but plundered and destroyed with indiscriminate cruelty. The assembled Bishops exhorted all the faithful to oppose such ravages as these courageously, and to defend the Christians against such evils.[24] Here we see the origin of the persecution to which the Albigenses were exposed, and of the measures of retaliation which date from this period. In a brutal age and among an excitable population we need not be surprised that many atrocities were committed. They are a cause of regret, but not of wonder.

Reviewing then the whole inquiry respecting Wyclif and his influence as the subject has passed before us in this imperfect sketch of his history, let us endeavour to sum up the results at which we have arrived in the fewest words possible. It seems to lead us to the following conclusions.

Of Wyclif personally, we have been unable to form any exalted estimate. Intellectually, there is little to admire in him. He was a voluminous author, and has left behind him a large mass of writings upon various subjects,

[23] *Petrus Venerabilis*, Migne, 189, 722, 726.

[24] Can. xxvii, in Coleti, Concil. xiii, 431.

thus supplying us with ample materials on which to form an estimate as to his mental capacity. These writings are remarkable only as embodying numerous blasphemies, heresies, errors, and absurdities, expressed in obscure language.

Morally, he does not commend our respect. He attacked the Church of which he was a priest, and in which he continued to minister long after he had denounced it as the synagogue of Satan. He rebelled against that ecclesiastical discipline which he had pledged himself to maintain and enforce. During many years he drew the revenues of his benefice, availing himself of an authority which he declared to be illegal and ungodly; and until the last day of his life he administered to others, and he himself received the Sacrament of the Eucharist according to a ritual which he denounced as false and blasphemous. His life must have been a daily lie, and he died as he was about to perpetuate an act of habitual mockery of the great Sacrifice of Calvary.

The religious system which he succeeded in introducing among his countrymen proves upon examination to be a collection of errors and heresies, each of which had previously been condemned by the common voice of the Catholic Church. They were gleaned by him from that stock of falsehood against which believers had been warned by our Lord from the beginning; but disregarding the caution, he picked them up, made them his own, and bequeathed this inheritance of evil to his native country. England accepted the legacy without knowing what it would cost her; but the knowledge has at last come. It is only after centuries of suffering and sin, of ignorance and rebellion, of heresy and schism, that our bitter experience enables us to estimate at its true value the work done by John Wyclif.

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